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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): ISIS INNOVATION LIMITED [GB/GB]; Ewert House, Ewert Place, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7DD (GB).

(72) Inventors; and

Oxford OX4 7GH (GB). DAVIES, Kay [GB/GB]; 55 Five Mile Drive, Oxford OX2 8HR (GB).

(74) Agents: WALTON, Sean, M. et al.; Mewburn Ellis, York House, 23 King's Way, London WC2B 6EP (GB).

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(54) Title: UTROPHIN GENE PROMOTER

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(57) **Abstract:** Second promoter for mouse and human utrophin genes. The promoters or fragments and derivatives may be used to control transcription of heterologous sequences, including coding sequences of reporter genes. Expression systems such as host cells containing nucleic acid constructs which comprise a promoter as provided operably linked to a heterologous sequence may be used to screen substances for ability to modulate activity of the utrophin promoter. Substances with such ability may be manufactured and/or used in the preparation of compositions such as medicaments. Up-regulation of utrophin expression may compensate for dystrophin loss in muscular dystrophy patients.

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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

UTROPHIN GENE PROMOTER

The present invention is based on cloning of a genomic promoter region of the human utrophin gene and of the mouse utrophin gene.

5 The severe muscle wasting disorders Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and the less debilitating Becker muscular dystrophy (BMD) are due to mutations in the dystrophin gene resulting in a lack of dystrophin or abnormal expression of truncated forms of dystrophin, respectively. Dystrophin is a
10 large cytoskeletal protein (427kDa with a length of 125nm) which in muscle is located at the cytoplasmic surface of the sarcolemma, the neuromuscular junction (NMJ) and myotendinous junction (MTJ). It binds to a complex of proteins and glycoproteins spanning the sarcolemma called the dystrophin
15 associated glycoprotein complex (DGC). The breakdown of the integrity of this complex due to loss of, or impairment of dystrophin function, leads to muscle degeneration and the DMD phenotype.

20 The dystrophin gene is the largest gene so far identified in man, covering over 2.7 megabases and containing 79 exons. The corresponding 14kb dystrophin mRNA is expressed predominantly in skeletal, cardiac and smooth muscle with lower levels in brain. Transcription of dystrophin in different tissues is regulated from either the brain promoter (predominantly active
25 in neuronal cells) or muscle promoter (differentiated myogenic cells, and primary glial cells) giving rise to differing first exons. A third promoter between the muscle promoter and the second exon of dystrophin regulates expression in cerebellar Purkinje neurons. Recently reviewed in (Tinsley, et al (1994)
30 Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A 91, 8307-13, Blake, et al (1994) Trends in Cell Biol. 4: 19-23,Tinsley, et al (1993) Curr Opin Genet Dev. 3: 484-90).

There are various approaches which have been adopted for the gene therapy of DMD, using the *mdx* mouse as a model system. However, there are considerable problems related to the number of muscle cells that can be made dystrophin positive, the 5 levels of expression of the gene and the duration of expression (Partridge, et al. (1995) *British Medical Bulletin* 51: 123-137). It has also become apparent that simply re-introducing genes expressing the dystrophin carboxy-terminus has no effect on the dystrophic phenotype although the DGC 10 appears to be re-established at the sarcolemma (Cox, et al. (1994) *Nature Genet* 8: 333-339, Greenberg, et al. (1994) *Nature Genet* 8: 340-344).

In order to circumvent some of these problems, possibilities 15 of compensating for dystrophin loss using a related protein, utrophin, are being explored as an alternative route to dystrophin gene therapy. A similar strategy is currently being evaluated in clinical trials to up-regulate foetal haemoglobin to compensate for the affected adult-globin chains in patients with sickle cell anaemia (Rodgers, et al. (1993) *N Engl J Med.* 328: 73-80, Perrine, et al. (1993) *N Engl J Med.* 328: 81-86).

Utrophin is a 395kDa protein encoded by multiexonic 1Mb UTRN 20 gene located on chromosome 6q24 (Pearce, et al. (1993) *Hum Mol Gene.* 2: 1765-1772). At present the tissue regulation of utrophin is not fully understood. In the dystrophin deficient *mdx* mouse, utrophin levels in muscle remain elevated soon after birth compared with normal mice; once the utrophin levels have decreased to the adult levels (about 1 week after birth), the first signs of muscle fibre necrosis are detected. 25 However there is evidence to suggest that in the small calibre muscles, continual increased levels of utrophin can interact with the DGC complex (or an antigenically related complex) at the sarcolemma thus preventing loss of the complex with the result that these muscles appear normal. There is also a 30

substantial body of evidence demonstrating that utrophin is capable of localising to the sarcolemma in normal muscle. During fetal muscle development there is increased utrophin expression, localised to the sarcolemma, up until 18 weeks in 5 the human and 20 days gestation in the mouse. After this time the utrophin sarcolemmal staining steadily decreases to the significantly lower adult levels shortly before birth where utrophin is localised almost exclusively to the NMJ. The decrease in utrophin expression coincides with increased 10 expression of dystrophin. See reviews (Ibraghimov Beskrovnaya, et al. (1992) *Nature* 355, 696-702., Blake, et al. (1994) *Trends in Cell Biol.*, 4: 19-23,Tinsley, et al. (1993) *Curr Opin Genet Dev.* 3: 484-90).

Thus, in certain circumstances utrophin can localise to the 15 sarcolemma probably at the same binding sites as dystrophin, through interactions with actin and the DGC. Accordingly, if expression of utrophin is sufficiently elevated, it may maintain the DGC and thus alleviate muscle degeneration in 20 DMD/BMD patients (Tinsley, et al. (1993) *Neuromuscul Disord* 3, 537-9.).

However, manipulation of utrophin expression and screening for molecules able to upregulate expression is hampered by the 25 limited understanding of utrophin expression regulation and its promoters. We have previously isolated a promoter element lying within the CpG island at the 5' end of the utrophin locus that is active in a broad range of cell types and tissues, and shown it to be synaptically regulated *in vivo* (Dennis, et al. (1996) *Nucleic Acids Res* 24, 1646-52 and WO 96/34101). The sequence contains a consensus N-box, a 6bp 30 motif important in the regulation of other genes expressed at the NMJ (Koike, et al. (1995) *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 92, 10624-10628). Localisation of utrophin at the NMJ in mature muscle is partially attributable to enhanced transcription of utrophin at sub-junctional myonuclei, with consequent synaptic

accumulation of mRNA (Gramolini, et al. (1997) *J Biol Chem* 272, 8117-20, Vater, et al. (1998) *Molecular and Cellular Neuroscience* 10, 229-242). The utrophin promoter drives synaptic transcription of a reporter gene *in vivo*; this expression pattern is abolished by point mutations within the N-box (Gramolin, et al. (1998) *J Biol Chem* 273, 736-43).

The present inventors hypothesised that utrophin might be transcribed from more than one promoter, an important consideration for the following reasons: First, it may be undesirable to interfere with the mechanisms underlying synaptic regulation of genes, as this might affect expression of other post-synaptic components and impair the structure and function of the NMJ; a promoter without synaptic regulatory elements might be a more suitable target for pharmacological manipulation. Second, cardiac dysfunction is a common feature of the dystrophinopathies (Hoogerwaard, et al. (1997) *J Neurol* 244, 657-63, Sasaki, et al. (1998) *Am Heart J* 135, 937-44); if the cardiac utrophin message was transcribed from a different promoter, then it might prove necessary to up-regulate this. Finally, inclusion of additional regulatory sequences might increase the yield of a screening program to identify small molecules capable of transcriptional activation of utrophin.

We have now identified an alternative promoter lying within the large second intron of the utrophin gene, 50kb 3' to exon 2. The promoter is highly regulated, expressed in a wide range of tissues and has little similarity to the synaptically expressed promoter. This promoter drives transcription of a widely expressed unique first exon that splices into a common full-length mRNA at exon 3. This unique exon (called exon IB) encodes a novel 31 amino acid N-terminus for the utrophin protein which may be involved in binding to the muscle membrane. The sequences of the two utrophin promoters are dissimilar, and we predict that they respond to discrete sets of cellular signals.

- Exon IB is primarily considered herein to encode the indicated 31 amino acids. However, the splice occurs within a codon for aspartate. This aspartate residue is common to both isoforms of utrophin. In embodiments of the invention an aspartate residue may be included C-terminal to the 31 amino acids to provide a 32 amino acid peptide, which may be joined to additional amino acids, for instance additional utrophin sequence as discussed. See, for instance, Figure 8 for one embodiment.
- 10 These findings significantly contribute to the understanding of the molecular physiology of utrophin expression and are important because the promoter reported here provides an alternative target for transcriptional activation of utrophin in DMD muscle. This promoter does not contain synaptic regulatory elements and might, therefore, be a more suitable target for pharmacological manipulation than the previously described promoter.
- 15

We have now cloned this alternative utrophin promoter and exon, and the present invention in various aspects and embodiments is based on the sequence information obtained and provided herein.

One major use of the promoter is in screening for substances able to modulate its activity. It is well known that pharmaceutical research leading to the identification of a new drug generally involves the screening of very large numbers of candidate substances, both before and even after a lead compound has been found. This is one factor which makes pharmaceutical research very expensive and time-consuming. A method or means assisting in the screening process will have considerable commercial importance and utility. Substances identified as upregulators of the utrophin promoter represent an advance in the fight against muscular dystrophy since they provide basis for design and investigation of therapeutics for

in vivo use.

In one aspect, the present invention provides an isolated nucleic acid comprising a promoter, the promoter comprising a sequence of nucleotides shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2. The 5 promoter may comprise one or more fragments of the sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 sufficient to promote gene expression. The promoter may comprise or consist essentially of a sequence of nucleotides 5' to position 1440 in Figure 1 (human) or position 1183 in Figure 2 (mouse). Preferably the 10 promoter comprises or consists essentially of nucleotides 1199 to 1440 of the human sequence shown in Figure 1, or the equivalent sequence in mouse, e.g. nucleotides 959 to 1183 of Figure 2.

An even smaller portion of this part of the sequences shown in 15 Figure 1 or Figure 2 may be used as long as promoter activity is retained. Restriction enzymes or nucleases may be used to digest the nucleic acid, followed by an appropriate assay (for example as illustrated herein using luciferase constructs) to determine the minimal sequence required. A preferred 20 embodiment of the present invention provides a nucleic acid isolate with the minimal nucleotide sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 required for promoter activity. The minimal promoter element is situated between the Pvull restriction site at position 1199 in the human sequence and the 25 transcription start site at 1440 bp in the human sequence and between nucleotides 959 to 1183 in the mouse sequence (see Figure 2).

In one embodiment a promoter according to the present invention comprises or consists of sequence that is shown in 30 Figure 3 to be conserved between the human and mouse sequences, e.g. the 25 nucleotide sequence:
ACAGGACATCCCAGTGTGCAGTTCG spanning the transcriptional start site.

- The promoter may comprise one or more sequence motifs or elements conferring developmental and/or tissue-specific regulatory control of expression. For instance, the promoter may comprise a sequence for muscle-specific expression, e.g.
- 5 an E-box element/myoD binding site, such as CANNTG, preferably CAGGTG.

Other regulatory sequences may be included, for instance as identified by mutation or digest assay in an appropriate expression system or by sequence comparison with available

10 information, e.g. using a computer to search on-line databases.

By "promoter" is meant a sequence of nucleotides from which transcription may be initiated of DNA operably linked downstream (i.e. in the 3' direction on the sense strand of

15 double-stranded DNA).

"Operably linked" means joined as part of the same nucleic acid molecule, suitably positioned and oriented for transcription to be initiated from the promoter. DNA operably linked to a promoter is "under transcriptional initiation

20 regulation" of the promoter.

The present invention extends to a promoter which has a nucleotide sequence which is allele, mutant, variant or derivative, by way of nucleotide addition, insertion, substitution or deletion of a promoter sequence as provided

25 herein. Systematic or random mutagenesis of nucleic acid to make an alteration to the nucleotide sequence may be performed using any technique known to those skilled in the art. One or more alterations to a promoter sequence according to the present invention may increase or decrease promoter activity,

30 or increase or decrease the magnitude of the effect of a substance able to modulate the promoter activity.

"Promoter activity" is used to refer to ability to initiate transcription. The level of promoter activity is quantifiable for instance by assessment of the amount of mRNA produced by transcription from the promoter or by assessment of the amount 5 of protein product produced by translation of mRNA produced by transcription from the promoter. The amount of a specific mRNA present in an expression system may be determined for example using specific oligonucleotides which are able to hybridise with the mRNA and which are labelled or may be used 10 in a specific amplification reaction such as the polymerase chain reaction. Use of a reporter gene as discussed further below facilitates determination of promoter activity by reference to protein production.

In various embodiments of the present invention a promoter 15 which has a sequence that is a fragment, mutant, allele, derivative or variant, by way of addition, insertion, deletion or substitution of one or more nucleotides, of the sequence of either the human or the mouse promoters shown in Figures 1 and 2, respectively, has at least about 60% homology with one or 20 both of the shown sequences, preferably at least about 70% homology, more preferably at least about 80% homology, more preferably at least about 90% homology, more preferably at least about 95% homology. The sequence in accordance with an embodiment of the invention may hybridise with one or both of 25 the shown sequences, or the complementary sequences (since DNA is generally double-stranded).

Similarity or homology (the terms are used interchangeably) or identity is preferably determined using GAP, from version 20 of GCG. This uses the algorithm of Needleman and Wunsch to 30 align sequences inserting gaps as appropriate to improve the agreement between the two sequences. Parameters employed are the default ones: for nucleotide sequences - Gap Weight 50, Length Weight 3, Average Match 10.000, Average Mismatch 0.000; for peptide sequences - Gap Weight 8, Length Weight 2, Average

Match 2.912, Average Mismatch -2.003. Peptide similarity scores are taken from the BLOSUM62 matrix. Also useful is the TBLASTN program, of Altschul et al. (1990) *J. Mol. Biol.* 215: 403-10, or BestFit, which is part of the Wisconsin Package, 5 Version 8, September 1994, (Genetics Computer Group, 575 Science Drive, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, Wisconsin 53711). Sequence comparisons may be made using FASTA and FASTP (see Pearson & Lipman, 1988. *Methods in Enzymology* 183: 63-98). Parameters are preferably set, using the default matrix, as 10 follows: Gapopen (penalty for the first residue in a gap): -12 for proteins / -16 for DNA; Gapext (penalty for additional residues in a gap): -2 for proteins / -4 for DNA; KTUP word length: 2 for proteins / 6 for DNA.

Nucleic acid sequence homology may be determined by means of 15 selective hybridisation between molecules under stringent conditions.

Preliminary experiments may be performed by hybridising under low stringency conditions. For probing, preferred conditions are those which are stringent enough for there to be a simple 20 pattern with a small number of hybridisations identified as positive which can be investigated further. .

For example, hybridizations may be performed, according to the method of Sambrook et al. (below) using a hybridization solution comprising: 5X SSC (wherein "SSC" = 0.15 M sodium 25 chloride; 0.15 M sodium citrate; pH 7), 5X Denhardt's reagent, 0.5-1.0% SDS, 100 µg/ml denatured, fragmented salmon sperm DNA, 0.05% sodium pyrophosphate and up to 50% formamide. Hybridization is carried out at 37-42°C for at least six hours. Following hybridization, filters are washed as 30 follows: (1) 5 minutes at room temperature in 2X SSC and 1% SDS; (2) 15 minutes at room temperature in 2X SSC and 0.1% SDS; (3) 30 minutes - 1 hour at 37°C in 1X SSC and 1% SDS; (4) 2 hours at 42-65°C in 1X SSC and 1% SDS, changing the solution

every 30 minutes.

One common formula for calculating the stringency conditions required to achieve hybridization between nucleic acid molecules of a specified sequence homology is (Sambrook et al., 1989): $T_m = 81.5^\circ\text{C} + 16.6\log [\text{Na}^+] + 0.41 (\% \text{ G+C}) - 0.63 (\% \text{ formamide}) - 600/\# \text{bp}$ in duplex.

As an illustration of the above formula, using $[\text{Na}^+] = [0.368]$ and 50-% formamide, with GC content of 42% and an average probe size of 200 bases, the T_m is 57°C . The T_m of a DNA duplex decreases by $1 - 1.5^\circ\text{C}$ with every 1% decrease in homology. Thus, targets with greater than about 75% sequence identity would be observed using a hybridization temperature of 42°C . Such a sequence would be considered substantially homologous to the nucleic acid sequence of the present invention.

It is well known in the art to increase stringency of hybridisation gradually until only a few positive clones remain. Other suitable conditions include, e.g. for detection of sequences that are about 80-90% identical, hybridization overnight at 42°C in 0.25M Na_2HPO_4 , pH 7.2, 6.5% SDS, 10% dextran sulfate and a final wash at 55°C in 0.1X SSC, 0.1% SDS. For detection of sequences that are greater than about 90% identical, suitable conditions include hybridization overnight at 65°C in 0.25M Na_2HPO_4 , pH 7.2, 6.5% SDS, 10% dextran sulfate and a final wash at 60°C in 0.1X SSC, 0.1% SDS.

In a further embodiment, hybridisation of nucleic acid molecule to an allele or variant may be determined or identified indirectly, e.g. using a nucleic acid amplification reaction, particularly the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). PCR requires the use of two primers to specifically amplify target nucleic acid, so preferably two nucleic acid molecules

with sequences characteristic of the utrophin promoter are employed. Using RACE PCR, only one such primer may be needed (see "PCR protocols; A Guide to Methods and Applications", Eds. Innis et al, Academic Press, New York, (1990)).

- 5 Thus a method involving use of PCR in obtaining nucleic acid according to the present invention may include:
- (a) providing a preparation of nucleic acid, e.g. from a muscle cell;
 - (b) providing a pair of nucleic acid molecule primers useful in (i.e. suitable for) PCR, at least one of said primers being a primer specific for nucleic acid according to the present invention;
 - (c) contacting nucleic acid in said preparation with said primers under conditions for performance of PCR;
 - 15 (d) performing PCR and determining the presence or absence of an amplified PCR product.

The presence of an amplified PCR product may indicate identification of an allele or other variant. The sequence may have the ability to promote transcription (i.e. have 20 "promoter activity") in muscle cells, e.g. human muscle cells, or muscle-specific transcription.

Further provided by the present invention is a nucleic acid construct comprising a utrophin promoter region or a fragment, mutant, allele, derivative or variant thereof able to promoter 25 transcription, operably linked to a heterologous gene, e.g. a coding sequence. By "heterologous" is meant a gene other than utrophin. Modified forms of utrophin are generally excluded. Generally, the gene may be transcribed into mRNA which may be translated into a peptide or polypeptide product which may be 30 detected and preferably quantitated following expression. A gene whose encoded product may be assayed following expression is termed a "reporter gene", i.e. a gene which "reports" on promoter activity.

The reporter gene preferably encodes an enzyme which catalyses a reaction which produces a detectable signal, preferably a visually detectable signal, such as a coloured product. Many examples are known, including β -galactosidase and luciferase.

5 β -galactosidase activity may be assayed by production of blue colour on substrate, the assay being by eye or by use of a spectrophotometer to measure absorbance. Fluorescence, for example that produced as a result of luciferase activity, may be quantitated using a spectrophotometer. Radioactive assays

10 may be used, for instance using chloramphenicol acetyltransferase, which may also be used in non-radioactive assays. The presence and/or amount of gene product resulting from expression from the reporter gene may be determined using a molecule able to bind the product, such as an antibody or

15 fragment thereof. The binding molecule may be labelled directly or indirectly using any standard technique.

Those skilled in the art are well aware of a multitude of possible reporter genes and assay techniques which may be used to determine gene activity. Any suitable reporter/assay may

20 be used and it should be appreciated that no particular choice is essential to or a limitation of the present invention.

Expression of a reporter gene from the promoter may be in an *in vitro* expression system or may be intracellular (*in vivo*). Expression generally requires the presence, in addition to the

25 promoter which initiates transcription, a translational initiation region and transcriptional and translational termination regions. One or more introns may be present in the gene, along with mRNA processing signals (e.g. splice sites).

30 Systems for cloning and expression of a polypeptide are discussed further below.

The present invention also provides a nucleic acid vector

comprising a promoter as disclosed herein. Such a vector may comprise a suitably positioned restriction site or other means for insertion into the vector of a sequence heterologous to the promoter to be operably linked thereto.

- 5 Suitable vectors can be chosen or constructed, containing appropriate regulatory sequences, including promoter sequences, terminator fragments, polyadenylation sequences, enhancer sequences, marker genes and other sequences as appropriate. For further details see, for example, *Molecular
10 Cloning: a Laboratory Manual*: 2nd edition, Sambrook et al, 1989, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. Procedures for introducing DNA into cells depend on the host used, but are well known.

Thus, a further aspect of the present invention provides a
15 host cell containing a nucleic acid construct comprising a promoter element, as disclosed herein, operably linked to a heterologous gene. A still further aspect provides a method comprising introducing such a construct into a host cell. The introduction may employ any available technique, including,
20 for eukaryotic cells, calcium phosphate transfection, DEAE-Dextran transfection, electroporation, liposome-mediated transfection and transduction using retrovirus.

The introduction may be followed by causing or allowing expression of the heterologous gene under the control of the
25 promoter, e.g. by culturing host cells under conditions for expression of the gene.

In one embodiment, the construct comprising promoter and gene is integrated into the genome (e.g. chromosome) of the host cell. Integration may be promoted by inclusion in the
30 construct of sequences which promote recombination with the genome, in accordance with standard techniques.

Many known techniques and protocols for manipulation of nucleic acid, for example in preparation of nucleic acid constructs, mutagenesis, sequencing, introduction of DNA into cells and gene expression, and analysis of proteins, are 5 described in detail in *Current Protocols in Molecular Biology*, Second Edition, Ausubel et al. eds., John Wiley & Sons, 1994, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Nucleic acid molecules, constructs and vectors according to the present invention may be provided isolated and/or purified 10 (i.e. from their natural environment), in substantially pure or homogeneous form, free or substantially free of a utrophin coding sequence, or free or substantially free of nucleic acid or genes of the species of interest or origin other than the promoter sequence. Nucleic acid according to the present 15 invention may be wholly or partially synthetic. The term "isolate" encompasses all these possibilities.

Nucleic acid constructs comprising a promoter (as disclosed herein) and a heterologous gene (reporter) may be employed in screening for a substance able to modulate utrophin promoter 20 activity. For therapeutic purposes, e.g. for treatment of muscular dystrophy, a substance able to up-regulate expression of the promoter may be sought. A method of screening for ability of a substance to modulate activity of a utrophin promoter may comprise contacting an expression system, such as 25 a host cell, containing a nucleic acid construct as herein disclosed with a test or candidate substance and determining expression of the heterologous gene. The level of transcription of the heterologous gene, or the level of heterologous protein may be determined. The level of protein 30 may be determined by measuring the amount of protein, or the activity of the protein, using techniques known to those skilled in the art.

Alternatively, or additionally a method of screening for

ability of a substance to modulate activity of a utrophin promoter may comprise contacting a cell containing an endogenous utrophin gene (e.g. a mammalian muscle cell) with a test substance and measuring the level of RNA transcription or 5 protein expression using binding members specific for the nucleic acid or polypeptides disclosed herein. Specific binding members include antibodies and nucleic acid probes.

The level of expression in the presence of the test substance may be compared with the level of expression in the absence of 10 the test substance. A difference in expression in the presence of the test substance indicates ability of the substance to modulate gene expression. An increase in expression of the heterologous gene compared with expression of another gene not linked to a promoter as disclosed herein 15 indicates specificity of the substance for modulation of the utrophin promoter.

A promoter construct may be transfected into a cell line using any technique previously described to produce a stable cell line containing the reporter construct integrated into the genome. The cells may be grown and incubated with test 20 compounds for varying times. The cells may be grown in 96 well plates to facilitate the analysis of large numbers of compounds. The cells may then be washed and the reporter gene expression analysed. For some reporters, such as luciferase, 25 the cells will be lysed then analysed. Previous experiments testing the effects of glucocorticoids on the endogenous utrophin protein and RNA levels in myoblasts have already been described [12,13] and techniques used for those experiments may similarly be employed.

30 Constructs comprising one or more developmental and/or time-specific regulatory motifs (as discussed) may be used to screen for a substance able to modulate the corresponding aspect of the promoter activity, e.g. muscle-specific

expression.

Following identification of a substance which modulates or affects utrophin promoter activity, the substance may be investigated further. Furthermore, it may be manufactured and/or used in preparation, i.e. manufacture or formulation, of a composition such as a medicament, pharmaceutical composition or drug. These may be administered to individuals.

As noted above, the inventors also identified a novel coding sequence (Exon 1B) which encodes a novel utrophin N-terminus.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a nucleic acid molecule which has a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide which includes the amino acid sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2. Such a polypeptide may include other utrophin sequences, and the nucleic acid molecule may be in the form of a utrophin "mini-gene" (discussed further below).

Such a polypeptide may include non-utrophin (i.e. heterologous or foreign) sequences and thereby form a larger fusion protein. For example, such a fusion protein could be used to target a non-utrophin polypeptide to muscle membranes.

The coding sequence included may be that shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 or it may be a mutant, variant, derivative or allele of the sequence shown. The sequence may differ from that shown by a change which is one or more of addition, insertion, deletion and substitution of one or more nucleotides of the sequence shown. Changes to a nucleotide sequence may result in an amino acid change at the protein level, or not, as determined by the genetic code.

Thus, nucleic acid according to the present invention may

include a sequence different from the sequences shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 yet encode a polypeptide with the same amino acid sequence. The amino acid sequences shown in Figure 1 and figure 2 consist of 31 residues.

- 5 On the other hand the encoded polypeptide may comprise an amino acid sequence which differs by one or more amino acid residues from the amino acid sequences shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2. Nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is an amino acid sequence mutant, variant, derivative or allele of
10 the sequences shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 are further provided by the present invention. Nucleic acid encoding such a polypeptide may show at the nucleotide sequence and/or encoded amino acid level greater than about 60% homology with the coding sequence and/or the amino acid sequence shown in
15 Figure 1 or Figure 2, greater than about 70% homology, greater than about 80% homology, greater than about 90% homology or greater than about 95% homology. Determination of homology is discussed elsewhere herein.

- A polypeptide which is a variant, allele, derivative or mutant
20 may have an amino acid sequence which differs from that given in a figure herein by one or more of addition, substitution, deletion and insertion of one or more amino acids. Preferred such polypeptides have wild-type function, that is to say have one or more of the following properties: immunological cross-
25 reactivity with an antibody reactive the polypeptide for which the sequence is given in Figure 1 or Figure 2; sharing an epitope with the polypeptide for which the amino acid sequence is shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2(as determined for example by immunological cross-reactivity between the two polypeptides);
30 a biological activity which is inhibited by an antibody raised against the polypeptide whose sequence is shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2; ability to bind muscle membrane, ability to bind actin; ability to bind DPC.

- Variations in amino acid sequence include "conservative variation", i.e. substitution of one hydrophobic residue such as isoleucine, valine, leucine or methionine for another, or the substitution of one polar residue for another, such as 5 arginine for lysine, glutamic for aspartic acid, or glutamine for asparagine. Particular amino acid sequence variants may differ from that shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 by insertion, addition, substitution or deletion of 1 amino acid, 2, 3, 4, or 5-10 amino acids.
- 10 According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided a nucleic acid molecule comprising a sequence of nucleotides encoding a polypeptide with utrophin function. Utrophin nucleotide sequences which may be included in the nucleic acid molecule are disclosed in WO 97/922696 which is 15 incorporated herein by reference.
- See also Figure 8 and Figure 9 for disclosure of nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides according to the present invention, comprising the exon 1B sequence of the invention.
- A polypeptide with utrophin function is able to bind actin and 20 able to bind the dystrophin protein complex (DPC).
- The nucleic acid molecule may be an isolate, or in an isolated and/or purified form, that is to say not in an environment in which it is found in nature, removed from its natural environment. It may be free from other nucleic acid 25 obtainable from the same species, e.g. encoding another polypeptide.
- In one embodiment, nucleic acid molecule is a "mini-gene", i.e. the polypeptide encoded does not correspond to full-length utrophin but is rather shorter, a truncated version 30 (Utrophin mini-genes are discussed in WO97/22696). For instance, part or all of the rod domain may be missing, such

that the polypeptide comprises an actin-binding domain and a DPC-binding domain but is shorter than naturally occurring utrophin. In a full-length utrophin gene including what are identified herein as exons 1A and 1B, the actin-binding domain 5 is encoded by nucleotides 1-739, while the DPC-binding domain (CRCT) is encoded by nucleotides 8499-10301 (where 1 represents the start of translation). See also Figure 8. The respective domains in the polypeptide encoded by a mini-gene according to the invention may comprise amino acids 10 corresponding to those encoded by these nucleotides in the full-length coding sequence. In one embodiment, a minigene according to the present invention comprises or consists of the amino acid sequence encoded by nucleotides 1-739 and 8499-10301 of the A isoform of utrophin in which exon 1B as 15 identified herein is substituted for exons 1A and 2A. The sequence of such a minigene can be constructed by the ordinary skilled person using information disclosed herein, taking into account the content of WO97/22696 and Tinsley et al, *Nature* (1996) 384:349. The nucleic acid sequence and predicted 20 amino acid sequence encoded by a 'mini-gene' according to the present invention are shown in Figure 9.

Advantages of a mini-gene over a sequence encoding a full-length utrophin molecule or derivative thereof include easier 25 manipulation and inclusion in vectors, such as adenoviral and retroviral vectors for delivery and expression.

A further preferred non-naturally occurring nucleic acid 30 molecule encoding a polypeptide with the specified characteristics is a chimaeric construct wherein the encoding sequence comprises a sequence obtainable from one mammal, preferably human ("a human sequence"), and a sequence obtainable from another mammal, preferably mouse ("a mouse sequence"). Such a chimaeric construct may of course comprise the addition, insertion, substitution and/or deletion of one 35 or more nucleotides with respect to the parent mammalian

- sequences from which it is derived. Preferably, the part of the coding sequence which encodes the actin-binding domain comprises a sequence of nucleotides obtainable from the mouse, or other non-human mammal, or a sequence of nucleotides
- 5 derived from a sequence obtainable from the mouse, or other non-human mammal.

In a preferred embodiment, the sequence of nucleotides encoding the polypeptide comprises sequence GAGGCAC at residues 331-337 and/or the sequence GATTGTGGATGAAAACAGTGGG at 10 residues 1453-1475 (using the conventional numbering from the initiation codon ATG), and a sequence obtainable from a human.

Nucleic acid according to the present invention is obtainable using one or more oligonucleotide probes or primers designed to hybridise with one or more fragments of a nucleic acid 15 sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2 particularly fragments of relatively rare sequence, based on codon usage or statistical analysis. The amino acid sequence information provided may be used in design of degenerate probes/primers or "long" probes. A primer designed to hybridise with a fragment 20 of the nucleic acid sequence shown may be used in conjunction with one or more oligonucleotides designed to hybridise to a sequence in a cloning vector within which target nucleic acid has been cloned, or in so-called "RACE" (rapid amplification of cDNA ends) in which cDNA's in a library are ligated to an 25 oligonucleotide linker and PCR is performed using a primer which hybridises with the sequence shown in the figures and a primer which hybridises to the oligonucleotide linker.

Nucleic acid isolated and/or purified from one or more cells (e.g. human, mouse) or a nucleic acid library derived from 30 nucleic acid isolated and/or purified from cells (e.g. a cDNA library derived from mRNA isolated from the cells), may be probed under conditions for selective hybridisation and/or subjected to a specific nucleic acid amplification reaction

such as the polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

A method may include hybridisation of one or more (e.g. two) probes or primers to target nucleic acid. Where the nucleic acid is double-stranded DNA, hybridisation will generally be
5 preceded by denaturation to produce single-stranded DNA. The hybridisation may be as part of a PCR procedure, or as part of a probing procedure not involving PCR. An example procedure would be a combination of PCR and low stringency hybridisation. A screening procedure, chosen from the many
10 available to those skilled in the art, is used to identify successful hybridisation events and isolated hybridised nucleic acid.

Probing may employ the standard Southern blotting technique. For instance DNA may be extracted from cells and digested with
15 different restriction enzymes. Restriction fragments may then be separated by electrophoresis on an agarose gel, before denaturation and transfer to a nitrocellulose filter. Labelled probe may be hybridised to the DNA fragments on the filter and binding determined. DNA for probing may be
20 prepared from RNA preparations from cells.

Preliminary experiments may be performed by hybridising under low stringency conditions various probes to Southern blots of DNA digested with restriction enzymes. Suitable conditions would be achieved when a large number of hybridising fragments
25 were obtained while the background hybridisation was low. Using these conditions nucleic acid libraries, e.g. cDNA libraries representative of expressed sequences, may be searched.

It may be necessary for one or more gene fragments to be
30 ligated to generate a full-length coding sequence. Also, where a full-length encoding nucleic acid molecule has not been obtained, a smaller molecule representing part of the

full molecule, may be used to obtain full-length clones. Inserts may be prepared from partial cDNA clones and used to screen cDNA libraries.

Those skilled in the art are well able to employ suitable
5 conditions of the desired stringency for selective hybridisation, taking into account factors such as oligonucleotide length and base composition, temperature and so on. Exemplary conditions have been discussed already above.

10 Nucleic acid according to the present invention may form part of a cloning vector and/or a vector from which the encoded polypeptide may be expressed. Polypeptide expression is discussed below. Suitable vectors can be chosen or constructed, containing appropriate and appropriately
15 positioned regulatory sequences, as discussed elsewhere herein.

A further aspect of the present invention provides a polypeptide which comprises the amino acid sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2. As mentioned earlier such a polypeptide
20 may include other utrophin sequences or may include heterologous sequences.

Polypeptides which are amino acid sequence variants, alleles, derivatives or mutants are also provided by the present invention. Such polypeptides are discussed elsewhere herein.
25 The skilled person can use the techniques described herein and others well known in the art to produce large amounts of peptides, for instance by expression from encoding nucleic acid.

In a further aspect the invention provides a method of making
30 a polypeptide, the method including expression from nucleic

acid encoding the polypeptide (generally nucleic acid according to the invention). This may be conveniently be achieved by growing in culture a host cell containing such a vector, under suitable conditions which cause or allow 5 expression of the polypeptide. Polypeptides may also be expressed in *in vitro* systems such as reticulocyte lysate.

Systems for cloning and expression of a polypeptide in a variety of different host cells are well known. Suitable host cells include bacteria, mammalian cells, yeast and baculovirus 10 systems. Mammalian cell lines available in the art for expression of a heterologous polypeptide include Chinese hamster ovary cells, HeLa cells, baby hamster kidney cells and many others. A common, preferred bacterial host is *E. coli*.

Thus, a further aspect of the present invention provides a 15 host cell containing heterologous nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide as disclosed herein.

The nucleic acid may be integrated into the genome (e.g. chromosome) of the host cell or may be on an extra-chromosomal vector within the cell, or otherwise identifiably heterologous 20 or foreign to the cell.

A still further aspect provides a method comprising introducing such nucleic acid into a host cell. Suitable techniques are discussed elsewhere herein.

The introduction may be followed by causing or allowing 25 expression from the nucleic acid, e.g. by culturing host cells under conditions for expression of the gene. The polypeptide encoded by the nucleic acid may be expressed from the nucleic acid *in vitro*, e.g. in a cell-free system or in cultured cells, or *in vivo*. 30 If the polypeptide is expressed coupled to an appropriate signal leader peptide it may be secreted from the cell into

the culture medium.

- Peptides can also be generated wholly or partly by chemical synthesis. The compounds of the present invention can be readily prepared according to well-established, standard
- 5 liquid or, preferably, solid-phase peptide synthesis methods, general descriptions of which are broadly available (see, for example, in J.M. Stewart and J.D. Young, *Solid Phase Peptide Synthesis*, 2nd edition, Pierce Chemical Company, Rockford, Illinois (1984), in M. Bodanzsky and A. Bodanzsky, *The*
- 10 *Practice of Peptide Synthesis*, Springer Verlag, New York (1984); and Applied Biosystems 430A Users Manual, ABI Inc., Foster City, California), or they may be prepared in solution, by the liquid phase method or by any combination of solid-phase, liquid phase and solution chemistry, e.g. by first
- 15 completing the respective peptide portion and then, if desired and appropriate, after removal of any protecting groups being present, by introduction of the residue X by reaction of the respective carbonic or sulfonic acid or a reactive derivative thereof.
- 20 The present invention also includes active portions, fragments, derivatives and functional mimetics of the polypeptides of the invention. An "active portion" of a polypeptide means a peptide which is less than said full length polypeptide, but which retains a biological activity,
- 25 such as a biological activity selected from binding to ligand, binding to muscle membrane. Such an active fragment may be included as part of a fusion protein, e.g. including a polypeptide which is to be targeted to the muscle membrane.
- A "fragment" of a polypeptide generally means a stretch of
- 30 amino acid residues of about five to twenty-five contiguous amino acids, typically about ten to twenty contiguous amino acids. Fragments of the novel N-terminus polypeptide sequence may include antigenic determinants or epitopes useful for

raising antibodies to a portion of the amino acid sequence, or may be sequence useful for targetting to muscle membrane.

Alanine scans are commonly used to find and refine peptide motifs within polypeptides, this involving the systematic replacement of each residue in turn with the amino acid alanine, followed by an assessment of biological activity.

- 5 Preferred fragments of exon 1B polypeptide include those comprising or consisting of an epitope which may be used for instance in raising or isolating antibodies. Variant and
10 derivative peptides, peptides which have an amino acid sequence which differs from one of these sequences by way of addition, insertion, deletion or substitution of one or more amino acids are also provided by the present invention.

A "derivative" of a polypeptide or a fragment thereof may
15 include a polypeptide modified by varying the amino acid sequence of the protein, e.g. by manipulation of the nucleic acid encoding the protein or by altering the protein itself. Such derivatives of the natural amino acid sequence may involve one or more of insertion, addition, deletion or
20 substitution of one or more amino acids, which may be without fundamentally altering the qualitative nature of biological activity of the wild type polypeptide. Also encompassed within the scope of the present invention are functional mimetics of active fragments of the exon 1B polypeptides
25 provided (including alleles, mutants, derivatives and variants). The term "functional mimetic" means a substance which may not contain an active portion of the relevant amino acid sequence, and probably is not a peptide at all, but which retains in qualitative terms biological activity of natural
30 exon 1B polypeptide. The design and screening of candidate mimetics is described in detail below.

A polypeptide according to the present invention may be isolated and/or purified (e.g. using an antibody) for instance

after production by expression from encoding nucleic acid (for which see below). Thus, a polypeptide may be provided free or substantially free from contaminants with which it is naturally associated (if it is a naturally-occurring polypeptide). A polypeptide may be provided free or substantially free of other polypeptides. Polypeptides according to the present invention may be generated wholly or partly by chemical synthesis. The isolated and/or purified polypeptide may be used in formulation of a composition, which 5 may include at least one additional component, for example a pharmaceutical composition including a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, vehicle or carrier. A composition including a polypeptide according to the invention may be used 10 in prophylactic and/or therapeutic treatment as discussed 15 below.

A polypeptide, peptide, allele, mutant, derivative or variant according to the present invention may be used as an immunogen or otherwise in obtaining specific antibodies. Antibodies are useful in purification and other manipulation of polypeptides 20 and peptides, diagnostic screening and therapeutic contexts.

- 25 . Accordingly, a further aspect of the present invention provides an antibody able to bind specifically to the polypeptide whose sequence is given in Figure 1 or Figure 2. Such an antibody may be specific in the sense of being able to distinguish between the polypeptide it is able to bind and other human (or mouse) polypeptides for which it has no or substantially no binding affinity (e.g. a binding affinity of about 1000x less). Specific antibodies bind an epitope on the molecule which is either not present or is not accessible on 30 other molecules. Antibodies according to the present invention may be specific for the wild-type polypeptide. Antibodies according to the invention may be specific for a particular mutant, variant, allele or derivative polypeptide as between that molecule and the wild-type polypeptide, so as

to be useful in diagnostic and prognostic methods as discussed below. Antibodies are also useful in purifying the polypeptide or polypeptides to which they bind, e.g. following production by recombinant expression from encoding nucleic acid.

Preferred antibodies according to the invention are isolated, in the sense of being free from contaminants such as antibodies able to bind other polypeptides and/or free of serum components. Monoclonal antibodies are preferred for some purposes, though polyclonal antibodies are within the scope of the present invention.

Antibodies may be obtained using techniques which are standard in the art. Methods of producing antibodies include immunising a mammal (e.g. mouse, rat, rabbit, horse, goat, sheep or monkey) with the protein or a fragment thereof. Antibodies may be obtained from immunised animals using any of a variety of techniques known in the art, and screened, preferably using binding of antibody to antigen of interest. For instance, Western blotting techniques or immunoprecipitation may be used (Armitage et al., 1992, Nature 357: 80-82). Isolation of antibodies and/or antibody-producing cells from an animal may be accompanied by a step of sacrificing the animal.

As an alternative or supplement to immunising a mammal with a peptide, an antibody specific for a protein may be obtained from a recombinantly produced library of expressed immunoglobulin variable domains, e.g. using lambda bacteriophage or filamentous bacteriophage which display functional immunoglobulin binding domains on their surfaces; for instance see WO92/01047. The library may be naive, that is constructed from sequences obtained from an organism which has not been immunised with any of the proteins (or fragments), or may be one constructed using sequences obtained

from an organism which has been exposed to the antigen of interest.

Antibodies according to the present invention may be modified in a number of ways. Indeed the term "antibody" should be
5 construed as covering any binding substance having a binding domain with the required specificity. Thus the invention covers antibody fragments, derivatives, functional equivalents and homologues of antibodies, including synthetic molecules and molecules whose shape mimicks that of an antibody enabling
10 it to bind an antigen or epitope.

Example antibody fragments, capable of binding an antigen or other binding partner are the Fab fragment consisting of the VL, VH, CL and CH1 domains; the Fd fragment consisting of the VH and CH1 domains; the Fv fragment consisting of the VL and
15 VH domains of a single arm of an antibody; the dAb fragment which consists of a VH domain; isolated CDR regions and F(ab')² fragments, a bivalent fragment including two Fab fragments linked by a disulphide bridge at the hinge region. Single chain Fv fragments are also included.

20 A hybridoma producing a monoclonal antibody according to the present invention may be subject to genetic mutation or other changes. It will further be understood by those skilled in the art that a monoclonal antibody can be subjected to the techniques of recombinant DNA technology to produce other
25 antibodies or chimeric molecules which retain the specificity of the original antibody. Such techniques may involve introducing DNA encoding the immunoglobulin variable region, or the complementarity determining regions (CDRs), of an antibody to the constant regions, or constant regions plus framework regions, of a different immunoglobulin. See, for instance, EP184187A, GB 2188638A or EP-A-0239400. Cloning and expression of chimeric antibodies are described in EP-A-0120694 and EP-A-0125023.

- Hybridomas capable of producing antibody with desired binding characteristics are within the scope of the present invention, as are host cells, eukaryotic or prokaryotic, containing nucleic acid encoding antibodies (including antibody fragments) and capable of their expression. The invention also provides methods of production of the antibodies including growing a cell capable of producing the antibody under conditions in which the antibody is produced, and preferably secreted.
- The reactivities of antibodies on a sample may be determined by any appropriate means. Tagging with individual reporter molecules is one possibility. The reporter molecules may directly or indirectly generate detectable, and preferably measurable, signals. The linkage of reporter molecules may be directly or indirectly, covalently, e.g. via a peptide bond or non-covalently. Linkage via a peptide bond may be as a result of recombinant expression of a gene fusion encoding antibody and reporter molecule.
- One favoured mode is by covalent linkage of each antibody with an individual fluorochrome, phosphor or laser dye with spectrally isolated absorption or emission characteristics. Suitable fluorochromes include fluorescein, rhodamine, phycoerythrin and Texas Red. Suitable chromogenic dyes include diaminobenzidine.
- Other reporters include macromolecular colloidal particles or particulate material such as latex beads that are coloured, magnetic or paramagnetic, and biologically or chemically active agents that can directly or indirectly cause detectable signals to be visually observed, electronically detected or otherwise recorded. These molecules may be enzymes which catalyse reactions that develop or change colours or cause changes in electrical properties, for example. They may be molecularly excitable, such that electronic transitions

between energy states result in characteristic spectral absorptions or emissions. They may include chemical entities used in conjunction with biosensors. Biotin/avidin or biotin/streptavidin and alkaline phosphatase detection systems 5 may be employed.

The mode of determining binding is not a feature of the present invention and those skilled in the art are able to choose a suitable mode according to their preference and general knowledge. Particular embodiments of antibodies 10 according to the present invention include antibodies able to bind and/or which bind specifically, e.g. with an affinity of at least 10^{-7} M, to the peptides shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2.

Antibodies according to the present invention may be used in screening for the presence of a polypeptide, for example in a 15 test sample containing cells or cell lysate as discussed, and may be used in purifying and/or isolating a polypeptide according to the present invention, for instance following production of the polypeptide by expression from encoding nucleic acid therefor.

20 An antibody may be provided in a kit, which may include instructions for use of the antibody, e.g. in determining the presence of a particular substance in a test sample. One or more other reagents may be included, such as labelling molecules, buffer solutions, elutants and so on. Reagents may 25 be provided within containers which protect them from the external environment, such as a sealed vial.

The present invention extends in various aspects not only to a substance identified using a nucleic acid molecule as a modulator of utrophin promoter activity, or to a polypeptide, 30 or nucleic acid molecule in accordance with what is disclosed herein, but also a pharmaceutical composition, medicament, drug or other composition comprising such a substance, a

- method comprising administration of such a composition to a patient, e.g. for increasing utrophin expression for instance in treatment of muscular dystrophy, use of such a substance in manufacture of a composition for administration, e.g. for
- 5 increasing utrophin expression for instance in treatment of muscular dystrophy, and a method of making a pharmaceutical composition comprising admixing such a substance with a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, vehicle or carrier, and optionally other ingredients.
- 10 Administration will preferably be in a "therapeutically effective amount", this being sufficient to show benefit to a patient. Such benefit may be at least amelioration of at least one symptom. The actual amount administered, and rate and time-course of administration, will depend on the nature
- 15 and severity of what is being treated. Prescription of treatment, eg decisions on dosage etc, is within the responsibility of general practitioners and other medical doctors.
- 20 A composition may be administered alone or in combination with other treatments, either simultaneously or sequentially dependent upon the condition to be treated.
- 25 Pharmaceutical compositions according to the present invention, and for use in accordance with the present invention, may comprise, in addition to active ingredient, a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, carrier, buffer, stabiliser or other materials well known to those skilled in the art. Such materials should be non-toxic and should not interfere with the efficacy of the active ingredient. The precise nature of the carrier or other material will depend on
- 30 the route of administration, which may be oral, or by injection, e.g. cutaneous, subcutaneous or intravenous.

Pharmaceutical compositions for oral administration may be in

tablet, capsule, powder or liquid form. A tablet may comprise a solid carrier such as gelatin or an adjuvant. Liquid pharmaceutical compositions generally comprise a liquid carrier such as water, petroleum, animal or vegetable oils, 5 mineral oil or synthetic oil. Physiological saline solution, dextrose or other saccharide solution or glycols such as ethylene glycol, propylene glycol or polyethylene glycol may be included.

For intravenous, cutaneous or subcutaneous injection, or 10 injection at the site of affliction, the active ingredient will be in the form of a parenterally acceptable aqueous solution which is pyrogen-free and has suitable pH, isotonicity and stability. Those of relevant skill in the art are well able to prepare suitable solutions using, for 15 example, isotonic vehicles such as Sodium Chloride Injection, Ringer's Injection, Lactated Ringer's Injection. Preservatives, stabilisers, buffers, antioxidants and/or other additives may be included, as required.

Instead of a substance identified using a promoter as 20 disclosed herein, a mimetic or mimick or the substance may be designed for pharmaceutical use. The designing of mimetics to a known pharmaceutically active compound is a known approach to the development of pharmaceuticals based on a "lead" compound. This might be desirable where the active compound 25 is difficult or expensive to synthesise or where it is unsuitable for a particular method of administration, eg peptides are unsuitable active agents for oral compositions as they tend to be quickly degraded by proteases in the alimentary canal. Mimetic design, synthesis and testing may 30 be used to avoid randomly screening large number of molecules for a target property.

There are several steps commonly taken in the design of a mimetic from a compound having a given target property.

- Firstly, the particular parts of the compound that are critical and/or important in determining the target property are determined. In the case of a peptide, this can be done by systematically varying the amino acid residues in the peptide,
- 5 eg by substituting each residue in turn. These parts or residues constituting the active region of the compound are known as its "pharmacophore".

Once the pharmacophore has been found, its structure is modelled to according its physical properties, eg

10 stereochemistry, bonding, size and/or charge, using data from a range of sources, eg spectroscopic techniques, X-ray diffraction data and NMR. Computational analysis, similarity mapping (which models the charge and/or volume of a pharmacophore, rather than the bonding between atoms) and

15 other techniques can be used in this modelling process.

In a variant of this approach, the three-dimensional structure of the ligand and its binding partner are modelled. This can be especially useful where the ligand and/or binding partner change conformation on binding, allowing the model to take

20 account of this the design of the mimetic.

A template molecule is then selected onto which chemical groups which mimic the pharmacophore can be grafted. The template molecule and the chemical groups grafted on to it can conveniently be selected so that the mimetic is easy to

25 synthesise, is likely to be pharmacologically acceptable, and does not degrade *in vivo*, while retaining the biological activity of the lead compound. The mimetic or mimetics found by this approach can then be screened to see whether they have the target property, or to what extent they exhibit it.

30 Further optimisation or modification can then be carried out to arrive at one or more final mimetics for *in vivo* or clinical testing.

Mimetics of substances identified as having ability to

modulate utrophin promoter activity using a screening method as disclosed herein are included within the scope of the present invention.

Modifications to and further aspects and embodiments of the 5 present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art. All documents mentioned herein are incorporated by reference.

Experimental basis for and embodiments of the present 10 invention will now be described in more detail, by way of example and not limitation, and with reference to the following figures:

Figure 1 shows the sequence of the human exon 1B and promoter B. Numbering corresponds to the insert of pBSX2.0. The deduced translation of exon 1B is shown. The positions of features 15 such as restriction sites, IL-6 response element and Alu repetitive elements are shown.

Figure 2 shows the sequence of the mouse exon 1B and promoter B. Numbering corresponds to the insert of pBSX8.0. The deduced translation of exon 1B is shown. The positions of features 20 such as restriction sites, IL-6 response element and Alu repetitive elements are shown.

Figure 3 shows the sequence alignment of human (top) and mouse (bottom) exon 1B (in upper case) and promoter B. Numbering corresponds to the inserts of pBSX2.0 and pBSX8.0, 25 respectively. The human Pvull site (see Figure 7) is indicated. The open triangle indicates the position at which the luciferase coding sequence was inserted to make pGL3/UtroB/F (see below). The deduced translation of exon 1B is shown; amino acids marked in bold type are identical 30 between the human and mouse sequences. The conserved splice donor consensus is shown in grey. Two putative Apl sites and

an initiator-like element (Inr) are 100% conserved and indicated in black. A solid arrow marks the single transcription start indicated by primer extension; figures adjacent to the sequence indicate the number of individual 5' RACE clones that terminated at the positions shown.

Figure 4 shows the position of the primers used in RT-PCR of exon 1B-containing utrophin transcript, and the probes used to probe the PCR products. Primers specific to exon 1B (BF31) and utrophin C-terminus (CT2) were used to amplify 9816bp of 10 utrophin cDNA. The products were blotted and probed with U41, U107, BR4 and U16 as indicated. The diagram is not to scale; numbering refers to the nucleotide sequence of the full-length cDNA. The corresponding functional domains of the protein are indicated above: actin binding domain; rod, rod domain; Cys, 15 cysteine rich domain, C-Term; C-terminal domain.

Figure 5 shows a schematic representation of (A) human YAC and (B) mouse PAC contigs showing position of exons within the genomic map. Key to mouse restriction sites: C, Clal; S, 20 SacII; B, BssHII; X, XhoI. (C) shows the nomenclature for utrophin promoters, exons and transcripts.

Figure 6 shows the *in vitro* activity of utrophin promoter B. (A) shows normalised luciferase activity following transfection of three different human cell types with either 25 pGL3/utroB/F ('forward construct') or pGL3/utroB/R ('reverse construct').

Figure 7 shows deletion analysis of promoter B. The 1.5kb insert of pGL3/utroB/F was deleted at its 5' and 3' ends using the internal restriction sites indicated. Reporter activity 30 was assayed following transient transfection of IN157 and CL11T47 cells.

Figure 8 shows conceptual translation of exon 1B as part of

utrophin, showing a nucleotide sequence and encoded polypeptide according to embodiments of the present invention.

Figure 9 shows the nucleic acid and predicted amino acid sequence of a utrophin B isoform 'minigene'.

- 5 Figure 10 shows the dosage dependence of IL-6 mediated expression from the isoform B promoter.

Oligonucleotides, PCR, RT-PCR and 5'RACE

PCR and RT-PCR were performed as described (Blake, et al. (1996) *J Biol Chem* 271, 7802-7810). Oligonucleotide sequences

10 (5' to 3') were:

UM83	gatgttcctg tgaggccctc gag,
UM82	cacttggaa aaatcgagcg t,
U16	actatgtatgt ctgccagagt tg,
U107	gatccaatag cttcccttcca tcttt,
15 UBF	tggaaaaagt ggagggttggaa,
BR2	tccaaacctcc actttttcca,
BR4	gcctggagag ctacatgccccc t,
BF8	ctccacatct ttccctcat catct,
BF9	gattgtggtg atgggtttagaa,
20 BR10	gattgtggtg atgggtttagaa,
BR14	gatgtatgggg aaaaagatgt ggag,
BF15	aaacccaaaa taacacagga catc,
BF16	agtgttaacctt ctctctgttg,
BF21	taagcagatg taggtatgaa gc,
25 BF42	gtgtgttttg ttgtccactt c,
BR43	atagtttctt ccatctttt ag,
CT2	ctccacgttc ttccctctct act,
2ApF	gcgtgcagt gaccattttt cagatata,
1BpF	cgctgcagca gccaccacat ttctgttg,
3pR	gcgtgcagat cgagcttta tccatttg.

5' RACE was undertaken using adapter-ligated mouse heart cDNA (Marathon-Ready, Clontech), following the manufacturer's

protocol, using the supplied adapter primers with nested mouse utrophin primers UM83 (exon 4) and UM82 (exon 3). Products were cloned in pGEM-T (Promega). Human exon 1B was isolated from skeletal muscle cDNA by PCR using mouse primers UBF and 5 UM83. 5'RACE was used to clone the 5' end of human exon 1B, using primers U107 and BR4. Full-length utrophin RT-PCR was done as described (Blake, et al. (1996) *J Biol Chem* 271, 7802-7810.), but using Boehringer Expand Reverse Transcriptase and Long Template PCR reagents, and a primer annealing temperature 10 of 59°C. Semi-quantitative RT-PCR was performed using primers BF42 and BR43 to amplify utrophin B, and commercial primers (Stratagene) to amplify glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH). Exponential amplification was established by withdrawing samples from thermal cycling at 1 15 cycle intervals over a range of 5 cycles, predicted to span the exponential range following initial experiments in which samples were withdrawn at 5 cycle intervals. Products were blotted and probed with labelled BR4 or a 600bp GA3PH probe. Band intensities were quantified using a Storm phosphoimager. 20 A graph of $\log_2[\text{band intensity}]$ versus cycle number showed a linear relationship with gradient ≈ 1 , indicating near-perfect exponential amplification. The band intensities at any given cycle over this range are therefore directly proportional to the amount of cDNA in the original samples.

25 **Genomic Mapping and Clones**

Human YACs are as previously described (Pearce, et al. (1993) *Hum Mol Genet* 2, 1765-72). Southern blots of restriction digested YAC DNA were probed with end-labelled BR4. A 3.0kb hybridising XbaI fragment was cloned from YAC 4X124H10 (a YAC 30 clone which contains a human genomic DNA insert) into pBlueScript (Stratagene) generating pBSX2.0. Mouse PACs were identified from the RPCI21 library. A 398bp exon 1B/promoter B DNA probe (UB400) encompassing human positions 1129 to 1527 was used for exon 1B mapping. Library filters were screened 35 with probes to exons 1A-5 (Dennis, et al. (1996) *Nucleic Acid*

Res 24, 1646-52) and UB400. Eleven PACs were identified, and four of these arranged into a contig by restriction mapping. An 8.0kb XbaI fragment from PAC 110C24, that hybridised with UB400, was cloned in pBlueScript generating pBSX8.0.

5 **Northern Blots and Probes**

A human multiple tissue northern blot and b-actin control cDNA probe were obtained from Clontech. A utrophin C-terminal cDNA probe, encompassing the last 4.0kb of the utrophin message, was generated by PCR. Human exon 1B sequence between positions 10 1480 and 1596 was cloned into pGEM-T and an exon 1B antisense riboprobe was transcribed (In Vitro Transcription Kit, Promega) from the SP6 promoter following linearisation of the plasmid with NcoI. Hybridisation was carried out at 70°C in 50% formamide hybridisation buffer (Ausubel, et al. (1999) 15 Current Protocols in Molecular Biology (Wiley).) and the filter was washed at 75°C in 0.1xSSC, 0.1%SDS for 2 hours.

RNase Protection

Specific probes spanning the exon 1B/3 and exon 2A/3 boundaries were obtained by PCR amplification of mouse heart 20 cDNA using primers 2ApF, 1BpF and 3pR. Products were cloned in the PstI site of pDP18 (Ambion) and sequenced. Plasmids were linearised with EcoR1 (1B) or BamH1 (2A); labelled antisense riboprobe was transcribed from the T7 promoter and gel purified. RNase protection was carried out using RPAlII 25 kit (Ambion) following the manufacturer's instructions (30µg total RNA unless stated, hybridisation temperature 42°C, RNase A/T1 dilution 1:200). Following electrophoretic separation, band intensities were quantified as above, and corrected for the amount of label present in each protected fragment.

30 **Promoter/Reporter Constructs**

Reporter constructs were generated by PCR amplification of the human sequence between positions 39 and 1503, using pBSX2.0 as template. Pfu polymerase was used with primers BF9 and BR14.

Following 15 cycles of 96°C for 45 seconds, 62°C for 45 seconds, 72°C for 4 minutes, products were dA-tailed and cloned in pGEM-T. Clones were identified with product in both orientations and insert, liberated by digestion with SacI/NcoI, was cloned into the SacI/NcoI sites of a promoterless luciferase reporter plasmid (pGL3 basic, Promega), generating constructs with insert in forward (pGL3/utroB/F) and reverse (pGL3/UtroB/R) orientation with respect to the coding sequence of luciferase. Deletions of the forward construct were generated by cleavage at SpeI, NdeI, EcoRI and PvuII sites in the insert, followed by religation to sites in the 5' or 3' polylinker. Constructs were sequenced completely.

Cell Culture and Transfections

Three human cell lines (IN157 rhabdomyosarcoma (Nielsen et al., 1993, *Mol Cell Endocrinol* 93: 87-95), CL11T47 kidney epithelial and HeLa cervical epithelial (Cancer Research, 1952 12: 264) were maintained as described (Dennis, et al. (1996) *Nucleic Acid Res* 24, 1646-52). 2 μ g pGL3/utroB/F or R, or its molar equivalent, mixed with 0.5 μ g of LacZ control plasmid (pSV- β -gal, Promega) was transfected in each well of 6 well plates using Superfect (Qiagen), following the manufacturer's protocol. 48 hours later, cells were harvested and cell extracts were assayed for luciferase and β -galactosidase activity as described (Dennis, et al. (1996) *Nucleic Acids Res* 24, 1646-52). Luciferase activity was standardised to β -galactosidase activity in each individual sample to control for transfection efficiency. Results are expressed as mean luciferase/ β -galactosidase ratio for four individual transfections. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. For comparison of different constructs within the same cell line, results were standardised to those obtained with pGL3/utroB/F and are expressed as % of this value. For comparison of constructs between cell lines, results were standardised to those obtained with a luciferase-SV40

promoter/enhancer plasmid (pGL3 control, Promega) that generates high levels of reporter activity in all cell lines tested.

Primer Extension

- 5 Primer extension was carried out as described (18); end-labelled primer BR2 was annealed to 0, 30 or 50 μ g mouse heart total RNA at 58°C for 20 minutes, and extended at 42°C for 40 minutes. Products were separated on a 6% polyacrylamide gel, under denaturing conditions, alongside a sequencing ladder
10 generated from pBSX8.0 using primer BR2.

Results

An alternative 5' exon in utrophin mRNA

- Utrophin from a mouse heart cDNA library was amplified by 5'RACE, and the resulting products cloned and sequenced. Of 12
15 clones, 8 contained novel sequence 5' of exon 3. Below, we present evidence that the novel sequence is a single alternative 5' exon of utrophin containing a translational initiation codon. We refer to this sequence as 'exon 1B' to distinguish it from the previously described 5' cDNA sequence
20 comprising untranslated exon 1A and exon 2A which contains the translational start (Figure 5c).

- Figure 3 shows a sequence comparison of human and mouse exon 1B, and genomic flanking sequence. The position and phase of the splice junction at the 5' end of exon 3 is identical for
25 both exon 1B- and exon 2A-containing transcripts. Exon 1B contains a putative ATG translation initiation codon and open reading frame, in-frame with that of exon 3, predicting a novel 31 amino acid N-terminus to the utrophin protein. The context of the ATG codon is predicted to be favourable for
30 translation in that there is a purine at position -3 (bold in Figure. 3) (33). Human and mouse exons 1B show 82% nucleotide identity. The predicted translations are 84% identical and 94%

similar. The position and context of the ATG codon are conserved. The human sequence contains a second putative ATG codon immediately 5' (position 1511, solid bar in Figure.1), followed by a TAG stop codon. As this ATG does not adhere to 5 the Kozak consensus, is not associated with an open reading frame and is not present in the mouse sequence, we predict that this is not a functional translation start. A similar feature is present in human exon 2A, where the 5'UTR contains a short open reading frame prior to the true translation 10 start.

The transcript associated with exon 1B
A human multiple tissue northern blot was probed with an exon 1B anti-sense riboprobe. A single hybridising 13kb band was observed, identical to that produced by probing the same blot 15 with a cDNA encompassing 4kb of the utrophin C-terminus, indicating that exon1B is exclusively associated with a full-length utrophin mRNA. Exon 1B is ubiquitously expressed, and appears most abundant in heart and pancreas, and least 20 abundant in the brain, relative to β -actin. This is similar to the expression profile of total full-length utrophin.

RT-PCR was employed to confirm the association of exon 1B with a utrophin mRNA predicted to give rise to functional protein (Figure.4). Amplification of first strand cDNA from IN157 25 cells utilising a forward primer specific to exon 1B (BF3I) and a reverse primer within the utrophin C-terminus (CT2)produced a product of expected size. Successive hybridisation of this PCR product with domain-specific probes; U41, UBR4, U107 and U16, confirmed that exon 1B is associated with a utrophin 30 transcript spanning the full coding sequence of the gene.

The expression profiles of exons 1B and 2A were examined using RNase protection. Specific riboprobes corresponding to the exon 1B/3 and 2A/3 boundaries were simultaneously hybridised with total RNA, allowing direct quantitation of transcript

abundance. B-utrophin is the most abundant form in the heart, whereas exon 2A-containing transcripts predominate in the kidney. Approximately equal amounts of exons 1B and 2A were observed in the brain and in skeletal muscle.

5 **Mapping and cloning of genomic sequence associated with exon
1B**

Using probe BR4, exon 1B was mapped within our previously described human YAC contig (26) encompassing the 5' end of the utrophin locus (Figure.5a). A hybridising band was seen with 10 YAC 4X124H10 but not 4X23E3 or 5C2 indicating that exon 1B lies within the 120kb intron 2 of the utrophin gene. A subsequent database search identified a clone from the HGMP human chromosome 6 sequencing project, containing exons 1A, 2A and 1B. This indicated that exon 1B lies 52.2kb 3' of exon 2A 15 (Figure.5a). Probing the mouse genomic PAC library (RPCI21 from P. DeJong, Roswell Park Cancer Institute) with utrophin exons 1A, 1B and 2- 5 inclusive identified a series of genomic PACs spanning the 5' end of the mouse utrophin gene. Four of these PACs were assembled into a contig of the region. 20 Hybridisation with UB400 confirmed that exon 1B lies within intron 2 in the mouse (Figure.5b), approximately 50kb 3' of exon 2.

Human and mouse genomic fragments were obtained from the YAC and PAC libraries, respectively. Genomic sequence 25 encompassing exon 1B was obtained by an Xba I digest of YAC 4X124H10 (human 3kb fragment) and PAC110c24 (mouse 8.8kb fragment). These fragments were sub-cloned into pBluescript vector, the human fragment was deleted to 2kb during the sub-cloning. The plasmid clones were designated pBSX2.0 (human) 30 and pBSX8.0 (mouse). Comparison of the cDNA and genomic sequence showed no evidence of a further 5' exon in the transcript associated with exon 1B, suggesting that the genomic flanking sequence contained the transcription start and promoter element responsible for exon 1B expression. Our

nomenclature for utrophin 5' exons, transcripts and promoters appears in Figure 5c.

Promoter B

1.5kb of human genomic sequence 5' of exon 1B, including the 5'UTR of exon 1B, was cloned in both orientations into a promoterless luciferase reporter vector. Three human cell lines (IN157 rhabdomyosarcoma, CL11T47 kidney epithelial and HeLa cervical epithelial) were transiently transfected with these constructs. These three lines were chosen because they 10 are known to express utrophin mRNA and protein at different levels. Reporter activity was detected at significantly higher levels in cells transfected with the forward than the reverse orientation construct, indicating promoter activity (Figure 6). Interestingly, the level of activity varied between cell 15 lines by an order of magnitude. Semi-quantitative RT-PCR demonstrated that the variation of luciferase expression mimicked the transcription profile of endogenous utrophin exon 1B. In contrast, the GAPDH control showed identical amplification in all cDNA samples, indicating that the 20 differences seen in B-utrophin amplification have arisen from differences in the level of expression of the endogenous B-utrophin transcript in these cell lines. These data show that the 1.5kb of genomic sequence 5' of exon 1B utilised in these reporter clones contains the necessary signals to initiate 25 transcription of exon 1B, and regulatory elements that determine the level of expression in these cell lines.

To further delineate important elements within this region, a series of 5' and 3' deletions of promoter B were made, and the in vitro activity of each one assayed (Figure 7). A 300bp 30 element, contained within clone pGL3/utroB/F/D5' Pvu 1199, retains 70% activity of the full 1.5kb construct in expressing cell lines, and shows 74% identity between human and mouse (Figure 3). Homology falls to 50% when sequence further 5' if the human PvuII site is compared with corresponding mouse

sequence using a 35bp window. Homology was determined using GAP, from version 20 of GCG, with default parameters as noted already above.

Promoter B transcription start site

- 5 The 5' ends of 8 human and 4 mouse 5'RACE clones clustered around a putative cap site in the genomic sequence (Figure.3). None of the 5'RACE clones generated by amplification across the exon 3/exon 1B boundary extended further upstream. RT-PCR was carried out using forward primers around this region with
10 a reverse primer in exon 4. A product of expected size was amplified from IN157 cDNA by primers BF42 and BF8, but not BF16 or BF15, indicating that the transcription start is within the 18bp that separates the two primers BF15 and BF42. These 18 bases contain the putative cap site and the cluster
15 of RACE clone 5' ends.

To map the start site accurately, primer extension using an exon 1B reverse primer and mouse heart RNA was employed. This yielded a single product, indicative of a single transcription start site. Transcription initiates at mouse position 1183
20 within a 25-bp motif, which is 100% conserved between human and mouse. Part of this motif, spanning the cap site, is a 6/7 base match for the initiator consensus, and correspondingly shows homology to the initiators of other genes. The transcription start site is homologous to the initiators of
25 other promoters. Consensus 1, initiator consensus derived from sequence comparison of Inr' genes (Azizkhan, et al. (1993) *Critical Reviews in Eukaryotic Gene Expression* 3, 229-254.); consensus 2, experimentally-derived consensus for functional initiator (Jawahery, et al. (1994) *Molecular and Cellular Biology* 14, 116-127.); TdT, terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase; hRAR, human retinoic acid receptor α ; mCREB, mouse cAMP response element binding protein. Transcribed sequence is indicated in bold uppercase. We consider this promoter to be of the TATA'Inr' type.

Assaying for substances which modulate utrophin promoter activity

Method 1:

This method uses a mouse *mdx*-H2K myoblast line stably
5 transfected with a human 7.0kb utrophin promoter-luciferase construct. On day 1 myoblast cells transfected with the construct are plated out in 6-well dishes, with compound or DMSO-only for the negative controls.
10 4 x 6 well plates are used for every 3 compounds (the compounds are dissolved in DMSO and stored prior to use). For example, compound A, or B, or C were each added to 1 well, while the remaining 3 wells contain only DMSO. This results in 4 wells containing each compound and 12 wells with DMSO alone. Due to the inherent noise of both the harvesting/assay
15 and cell seeding/growth steps, this is the minimum number that results in meaningful analysis. Setting up the plates in this way means that the data really are paired, and can be analysed with a paired student T test. This provides a more powerful statistical analysis rather than putting each compound on a
20 different plate and comparing it with a control plate.

On Day 4 the cells are harvested and luciferase quantitation and pairwise analysis is carried out.

Method 2:

Compounds which up-regulate the endogenous utrophin promoter
25 are found using *mdx*-H2K myoblasts that are not transfected with the utrophin promoter-luciferase construct. *Mdx*-myoblasts can be used to mimic utrophin transcription and protein stability in dystrophin-deficient cells.

Identification of utrophin protein expression

30 Quantitative Western Blotting is used to measure the level of

utrophin expression (Tinsley JM, et al., *Nature Medicine* 4, 1441-1444.) Using 6 well plates and treating with compound as described above generates enough total protein sample to test by Western blotting. Antibodies specific to the A protein or 5 B protein are used to quantify levels of either protein.

Identification of utrophin RNA expression

Quantitative ribonuclease protection is used to analyse levels of utrophin expression. A pairwise design is used, as described above, but more cells are necessary. To see bands 10 clearly, about 20-30 μ g total RNA is used. Each compound and control will need a 175 cm² tissue culture flask. A dual probe to simultaneously identify the A transcript and B transcript is be used.

Using the two techniques described compounds are identified 15 after cell treatment which modulate utrophin levels. The same techniques are used for *in vivo* animal experiments where the compound is administered to dystrophin deficient *mdx* mice.

Interleukin-6 (IL-6) Interactions

Two related elements are present in the promoters of genes 20 encoding acute phase proteins that mediate an increase in transcription stimulated by an IL-6 triggered signalling cascade (Hocke et al., 1992). One of these was found to be present in the exon 1B flanking sequence. Wild type and mutated reporter fusions for IL-6 were therefore tested for 25 responsiveness in appropriate cell systems.

Constructs of the 1.5F B promoter normal and mutant (consensus change : ctggaa > gatata^a concerning the mutant: Hattori M et al (1990) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A.* Mar;87(6):2364-8.) were introduced into a promoter-less luciferase reporter vector and 30 transfected into IN157 cells with a renilla firefly control. Cells were washed and charcoal stripped serum added 5 hours

post-transfection and left overnight. IL-6 amounts were added as illustrated with an appropriate amount of IL-6 soluble receptor. The cells were left for 24 hours and then assayed for activity using a luminometer.

- 5 A dosage dependent transcriptional response was noted in the normal, but not the mutated reporter construct (figure 10). This result indicates the existence of a cytokine mediated signalling pathway which causes up-regulation of the B utrophin promoter through the interaction of IL-6 and IL-6 receptor with
10 the conserved IL-6 response element.

Discussion

We have demonstrated that there is a second promoter within intron 2 of the utrophin gene, driving expression of a unique first exon that splices into a common 13kb mRNA. These data are
15 important, both in terms of understanding the molecular physiology of utrophin expression, and in view of their application to therapeutic intervention in DMD.

The functional consequences of genes having more than one promoter have been postulated (reviewed in (Ayoubi, et al
20 (1996) *FASEB J.* 10, 453-460). A single gene may achieve a complex temporal and spatial expression pattern by interaction of different promoters with discrete subsets of transcription factors. Dystrophin is an example: three dissimilar promoters are active at different levels in specific cell types within
25 the heart, skeletal muscle and the brain (Gorecki, et al. (1992) *Hum Mol Genet* 1, 505-510., Barnea, et al. (1990) *Neuron* 5, 881-888, Holder, et al. *Human Genetics* 97, 232-239). Northern blot analysis, however, indicates that utrophin exon 1B is ubiquitously expressed, implying that promoters A and B
30 are co-expressed in many tissues. It is conceivable that examination of transcript distribution in whole tissue samples has masked cell type-specific patterns of expression. Data

from isolated human cell lines *in vitro* support this notion; we observed large differences in promoter B activity between different cell lines, consistent with an *in vivo* expression profile involving specific cellular populations.

- 5 Alternatively, the two promoters may be spatially regulated at a sub-cellular level. Within adult skeletal muscle fibres, promoter A is synaptically driven (Gramolini, et al. (1997) *J Biol Chem* 272, 8117-20.), yet aggregates of utrophin mRNA are detectable at up to 25% extrasynaptic nuclei (Vater, et al.
10 (1998) *Molecular and cellular Neuroscience* 10, 229-242). Expression of promoter B in the extrasynaptic compartment might be invoked as one possible explanation.

- A second proposed function of alternative promoters is the generation of transcripts with interchangeable 5' exons,
15 giving rise to mRNAs with alternative 5'UTRs or proteins with novel N-terminal domains. Unlike exon 1B, utrophin exon 1A contains a long GC-rich 5'UTR. In some transcripts, GC-rich 5'UTRs are not translated efficiently (Kozak, M. (1991) *J Cell Biol* 115, 887-903.), and there are examples of genes in which
20 alternative use of GC-rich and non-GC-rich 5'UTRs has been implicated in post-transcriptional regulation of protein synthesis (Nielson, et al. (1990) *J Biol Chem* 265, 13431-13434.). In addition, the predicted 31 amino acids encoded by exon 1B are different to the 26 amino acids of exon 2A; the
25 functions of the resulting N-termini may be different.

- The discovery of a second promoter provides a new target for the upregulation of utrophin to ameliorate the DMD phenotype. Promoter B is highly regulated, probably by different factors from promoter A, including IL-6. Elucidation of the mechanisms
30 responsible for the large difference in promoter B activity between IN157 and HeLa cells might lead to identification of a factor that can be delivered to muscle to activate utrophin expression. Importantly, as the N-box motif is absent from promoter B, this is unlikely to carry any risk of NMJ

disruption potentially inherent in the pharmacological manipulation of synaptically regulated promoter A.

CLAIMS

1. An isolated nucleic acid comprising a promoter which comprises a sequence of nucleotides selected from (i) the human promoter sequence shown in Figure 1 and (ii) the mouse promoter sequence shown in Figure 2, free or substantially free of utrophin coding sequence.
5
2. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises the sequence of nucleotides shown 5' to position 1440 in Figure 1.
- 10 3. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises the sequence of nucleotides shown 5' to position 1183 of the mouse sequence shown in Figure 2.
- 15 4. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises the nucleotides numbered 1199 -1440 in the sequence shown in Figure 1.
5. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises the nucleotides numbered 959-1183 in the sequence shown in Figure 2.
- 20 6. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises the nucleotide sequence
ACAGGACATCCCAGTGTGCAGTTCG.
- 25 7. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises a sequence of nucleotides that is an allele, mutant or derivative, by way of addition, insertion, deletion or substitution of one or more nucleotides, of the promoter sequence shown in Figure 1, which sequence has at least 60% homology with the promoter sequence shown in figure 1 and which promoter, when operably linked to a sequence of
30 nucleotides, has the ability to initiate transcription of that

sequence, said transcription being muscle-specific.

8. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises a sequence of nucleotides that is an allele, mutant or derivative, by way of addition, insertion, 5 deletion or substitution of one or more nucleotides, of the promoter sequence shown in Figure 2, which sequence has at least 60% homology with the promoter sequence shown in figure 2 and which promoter, when operably linked to a sequence of nucleotides, has the ability to initiate transcription of that 10 sequence, said transcription being muscle-specific.

9. An isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of a promoter which comprises a sequence of nucleotides that is an allele, mutant or derivative, by way of addition, insertion, deletion or substitution of one or more nucleotides, of the 15 promoter sequence shown in Figure 2, which hybridises to the promoter sequence shown in figure 2 under stringent hybridisation conditions and which promoter, when operably linked to a sequence of nucleotides, has the ability to initiate transcription of that sequence, said transcription 20 being muscle-specific.

10. A nucleic acid construct comprising an isolated nucleic acid according to any of the preceding claims operably linked to a heterologous sequence.

11. A nucleic acid construct according to claim 10 wherein 25 the heterologous sequence is a coding sequence.

12. A nucleic acid construct according to claim 11 wherein the heterologous sequence encodes a reporter molecule.

13. A host cell comprising a nucleic acid construct according to any of claims 10 to 12.

14. A method comprising culturing a host cell according to claim 13 under conditions for transcription of said heterologous sequence from the promoter.
15. A method according to claim 14 wherein the heterologous sequence is a coding sequence and the host cell is cultured under conditions for expression of the encoded peptide or polypeptide product.
16. A method according to claim 14 or claim 15 comprising detection of transcription of the heterologous sequence.
- 10 17. A method according to claim 14 or claim 15 comprising detection of expression of the encoded peptide or polypeptide product.
- 15 18. A method of screening for a substance able to modulate utrophin promoter activity, the method comprising contacting an expression system containing a nucleic acid construct according to any of claims 10 to 12 with a test or candidate substance and determining transcription of the heterologous sequence or expression of the encoded peptide or polypeptide product.
- 20 19. A method according to claim 18 wherein the expression system comprises a host cell containing said nucleic acid construct.
- 25 20. A method which comprises, following identification of a substance able to modulate utrophin promoter activity in accordance with a method according to claim 18 or claim 19, manufacture of the substance and/or use of the substance in manufacture or formulation of a composition.
- 30 21. The use of an isolated nucleic acid according to any of claims 1 to 6 for promoting transcription of an operably

linked sequence of nucleotides.

22. The use of claim 21 wherein the transcription is tissue-specific, with the tissue-specificity being muscle-specific.

5 23. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide including the amino acid sequence shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2.

10 24. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide that is an allele, mutant or derivative of a polypeptide including the amino acid sequence shown in Figure 1, which amino acid sequence has at least 60% homology with the polypeptide sequence in Figure 1 or Figure 2.

15 25. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide that is an allele, mutant or derivative of a polypeptide shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2, which nucleotide sequence hybridises with the nucleotide sequence encoding the polypeptide in Figure 1 or Figure 2 under stringent hybridisation conditions.

20 26. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide having the amino acid sequence shown in Figure 9.

27. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising the nucleotide sequence shown in figure 9.

25 28. Nucleic acid of any one of claims 23 to 27 comprised in a vector.

29. Nucleic acid according to claim 28 wherein said vector is an expression vector.

30. A host cell containing heterologous nucleic acid according to any one of claims 23 to 29.
31. A cell according to claim 30 which is a muscle cell.
32. A cell according to claim 30 wherein said polypeptide
5 is expressed.
33. A cell according to any of claims 30 to 32 which is in a mammal.
34. A non-human mammal having a cell according to any of claims 30 to 32.
- 10 35. A non-human mammal containing nucleic acid according to any of claims 23 to 29.
36. A method including introduction of nucleic acid according to any of claims 23 to 29 into a cell.
- 15 37. A method according to claim 36 wherein said introduction takes place *in vitro*.
38. A method which includes causing or allowing expression of the coding nucleotide sequence of heterologous nucleic acid according to any of claims 23 to 29 in a cell.
- 20 39. A method according to claim 38 wherein the cell is part of a mammal.
40. A method according to claim 38 wherein the expression product is purified and/or isolated following expression.
- 25 41. A method according to claim 40 wherein the expression product is formulated into a composition which includes at least one additional component, following purification and/or

isolation of the expression product.

42. An isolated polypeptide as encoded by nucleic acid according to any of claims 23 to 29.

43. An isolated utrophin exon IB polypeptide selected from:

- 5 (i) human utrophin exon IB polypeptide of which the amino acid sequence is shown in Figure 1;
(ii) mouse utrophin exon IB of which the amino acid sequence is shown in Figure 1.

10 44. An isolated polypeptide including the human polypeptide according to claim 43.

45. An isolated polypeptide including the mouse polypeptide according to claim 44.

15 46. An isolated polypeptide which has 60 % homology with the polypeptide according to claim 44 or 45.

47. An isolated fragment of a polypeptide according to claim 43, which fragments is 5 to 25 amino acids in length.

48. An isolated fragment of a polypeptide according to claim 43, which fragment is 10 to 20 amino acids in length.

20 49. An antibody specific for a polypeptide according to any one of claims 42 to 48.

25 50. A composition including a polypeptide according to any one of claims 42 to 46, a fragment according to claim 47 or claim 48, or an antibody according to claim 49, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

51. Use of nucleic acid according to any of claims 23 to 29 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating a dystrophin

phenotype in a mammal.

52. Use of a polypeptide according to any of claims 42 to 48 or an antibody according to claim 49 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating a dystrophin phenotype in a mammal.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

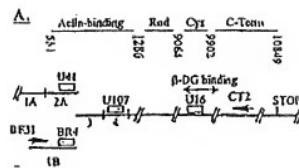


Figure 4

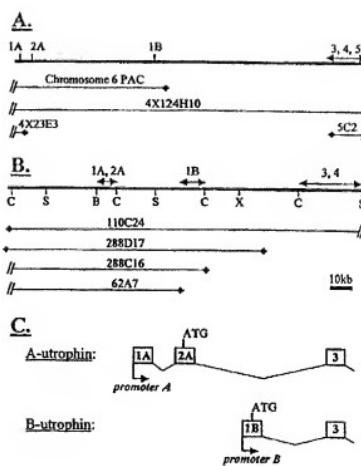


Figure 5

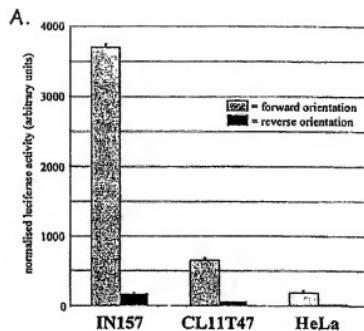


Figure 6

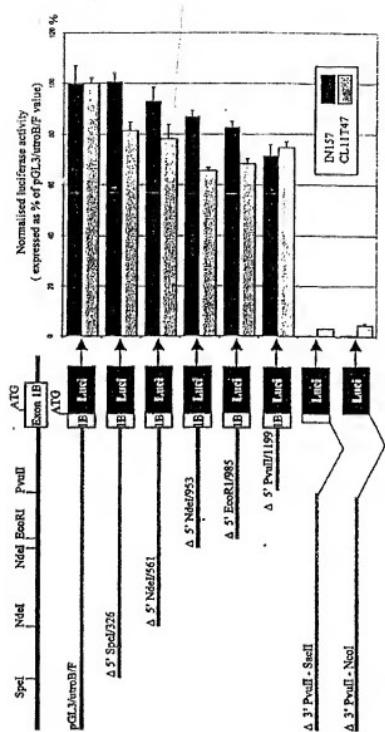


Figure 7

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Human B-utrophin up to nucleotide 1500, deduced translation

H S G L A A T T F H W K K C -

Exon 1B ← → Exon 3

```

  CCCAGTGTGCAGTTGAGGCTGCTTTGTTGTCACCTCCCACTCCTTCAT
  1 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  GGGTCACACGTCAAGCTTCCGACGAAAACAAGGTGAAGGGAGGTAGAAAAAGGATA
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  CATCTAAGCAGATGTAGGTGATGAGCGGCCCTGGCAGGCCACCUAGCTTCAATTGGAAAAAGT
  61 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  GTAGATTCGCTCATCCACTACTCGCCGGACCCYGGTGGTCAANGTAACCTTTCA
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  R L D L P G H V A L Q A C K R L P D E H -
  ACATGAGCTACAGAAACCTTACAAATGGTAAATGCTGGTTTCAGAGACTG
  121 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  CGTCTAACCTTAAACGGTCCGACATCGAGAGOTCGAAAGCTTCCGATAGTGCTACTCTG
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  N D V Q K K T F T K W I N A R F S K S G -
  GGAAACCCACCATCAATGATATGTTCAAGACCTCAAAGATGGAGGGAGCTATTGGATC
  181 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  CCTTTGGGGTAGTACTATAACAGATGTCGGAGTTCTACCTTTACGGCTAAAGTTCTAC
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  K P P I N D N F T D L E K D G R K L L D L -
  TTCTAGAAGGCCATCAAGGAACATCACTGCCAAAGGAACGGTTCCAAGGGTACATG
  241 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  AAAGATCTCGGAGGTGCTCTGTAGTGAAGGTTCTGACCAAGGTGTTCCCATGTC
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  L E G L T G T S L P F K E R G S T R V H A -
  CCTTAATAACAGTCACAGAGTCAGTGGTCAAGTTACATCAGAGCAGGGTACATG
  301 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  GGAAATTATAGCAGTGTCTCACGACTCCAAAGTGTCTTGTAACTCCATGTC
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  L N V N V R Y L Q V L H Q N N V E L V N -
  ATATAAGGGGAAACTGACATTCGGATGGAAATCACAACCTGACTTTGGGTACTTTGG
  361 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  TATATCCCCCTGACTGTACACCTACCTTTAGTGTGTTGACTGAAACCCATGAAACCT
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  I G G T D I V D G N H E L T L G L L W S -
  GCATCATTTGCACTGGCAGGTGAAAGATGTCATGAGGGATGTCATGTCGGACCTGAGC
  421 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  CGTAGTAAACAGTCAGCCGTCACCTTCACTAGCTACTCTACAGTACAGCTGGACCTGAGCTGG
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  I X L H W Q V K D V M K D V H S D L Q Q -
  AGACGAAACAGTGAAGAGATCCTGCTCAGCTGGTGGCTCAGACCAACAGGGCTCAGGCC
  481 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  TCTGCTCTCTACTCTCTAGGACGAGTCACCCACCCAGTCTGGTGGCTCAGGAAATGACGAGG
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  T H S E K I L L S W V R Q T T R P Y S Q -
  AGCTCAGGCTCTCMCTCACCCACAGCTGGACAGATGGACTCGCTTAAATGCTGTC
  541 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  TTCACTTGCAGGAGTGTAGGTGGTGGCTCAGCTTACCTGACGCGGAAATGACGAGG
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  V N V L N F T T S W T D G L A F H A V L -
  TCCACCGACATAACCTGATCTTCACTGGATAAGTTGTCAAAAGTCAACCAATG
  601 +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  AGGTGGCTGTATTGGAGTACAGAGTCGACCCCTATTCACAGTTACAGTGGTTAAC
  +-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
  H R H K P D L F S W D K V V K M S P I E -
  
```

Figure 8

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721 AGAGACTTGAAACATGCCCTCAGCAAGGCTCAAACCTATTGGGNNATTGAAAAGCTGTAG
 TCTCTGAACTGTAGCGAAGTCGTCGAGTTGGATAAACCCCTTAACTTTTGACAAATC
 c R L E H A F S K A Q T Y L G I E K L L D -
 ATCTGAAAGATGTTGCCTTCGGTTCTGCRAGAAGATTCATTAATTTGTTATTTACAT
 781 TAGGACTCTCACACCGCGAACGCGAAGGACTGTTCTTTAGGTATAACATAATTGTA
 c P E D V A V R L P D K K S T I M Y L T S -
 CTTGGTTGGGTGACTCTCACGACGTCACCATAGACGCCATCCGGAGGTAGAGACAC
 841 GAAACAAACTCCACGATGGTGTTCAGTGGTATCTCGCGTAGGCACCTCCATCTCGTG
 c L F E V L P Q Q V T I D A I R E V E T L -
 TCCCAAGGAAATATRAAAAAGAATGGVANGAGAGGCAATTATATACAGGTACCGCGC
 901 AGGGTTCTTATATTTTCTACACTCTCTCTCGGTAAATTATATGTCGAAGCGCG
 c P R E Y K K E C E E E A I N I O S T A P -
 CTGAGGGAGACATGAGAGTCCCCGAGCTGAAACTCCCGACGCTGACTGGGTCGACA
 961 GACTCTCTCTGACTCTCACGAGGCTCGACTTTGAGGTCGTGACAGTACTCCAGCTG
 c E E H E S P R A E T P S T V T E V D H -
 TTGGATCTGGACGCTATCAGATGGCGTTGGAGAAGTCGTGACCTGGTGGCTTCTCG
 1021 ACCTAGACCTGTGAGTGTCTAACGCGAACCTCTCACGACTGGACCAACGAAAGCGAC
 c D L D S T Y Q I A L E E V L T W L L S A E -
 AGGACACTTCCCAGGACAGGATGATATTTCTGATGATGTTGAGAAGTCGAAGAACAGT
 1081 TCTCTGGAAGGGCTCTGCTCTACTATAAGAGCTACTACAACTCTCTGAGTCTGCA
 c D T F Q E Q D D I S D D V E E V K D Q F -
 TTGCAACCATGAGCTTTATGATGGAACTGACTGACACCCAGGCTGTTGGCGAGCG
 1141 AACGTTGGGTACTTGTGAAATACTACCTTGACTGACGTTGGTCTGTCACACCCGOTCG
 c A T H E A F H M E L T A H Q S S V G S V -
 TCTTCAGGCAGGCAGCCACTGATAACACAGAACGACTCTGACAGAGAAATTG
 1201 AGGAGCTGCTGGTCCGGTTGGTACTATTTGTTCTGAGACAGTCCTCTCTTAAAC
 c L Q A G H O L I T Q G T L S D E E E E F E -
 AGATTCAGGAAACAGATGACCCCTGCGAAGATGCTAGATGGGAGGCTCTTGGGGAGAGTA
 1261 TCTTAAGTCTTGTCTACTGGAGGAGCTTACGATCTACCCCTCGAGATACTCCACCTCTCA
 c I Q E Q N T L L N A R W E A L R V E S H -
 TGGRCAGACAGTCCCGGCTGACGATGTFCTGTGAGGAACTGCGAGAAGGCAACTGCGAC
 1321 ACTGCTCTGGCTGAGGCGCCGCTGCTACAGCAGTACCTTGAGGCTTCTGAGCTGCG
 c D R Q S R L H D V L M E L Q K K O L Q Q -
 AGCTCTCCGCCCTGGTTAACACTCACAGAGGAGGCAATTGAGAGATGGAACCTGGCCCG
 1381 TCGAGGAGGCGGAGGACCAATTGAGGTCGTCCTCCGGTAACTCTTCTACCCCTTGACCGGGG
 c L S A H L T L T E R I O K H E T C P L -
 TGGAGATGATGTAAPATCTTACAAAAGCTCTGAGACACATTAAGATGTTGGAAAGTG
 1441 ACTACTACATGATTTAGAGTGTTTCTGAGATCTTCTGAGATCTTCTACCCCTTGACCGGG
 c D D D V K S L Q K L E E H K S L Q S D -

Figure 8 cont ...

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Sequence Range: 1 to 6059

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
ACTAGTCAG ATAGACGCGCC TGGCACGCC CACGTTCAT TGGAAAAGT GCAGATGGA TTGCCCCAGG CATGAGCTC
M S G L A A T T F H W K K C R L D L P G N V A>

90 100 110 120 130 140 150 160
TCCAGGCTG CAAGGGATTA CCAGATGAAAC ACAATGATGAT ACAGAGAAA ACCTTAACCA ATGGATGAAA CGCTGGATT
L Q A C K R L P D E H N D V Q K K T F T K W I N A R P>

170 180 190 200 210 220 230 240
TCCAAGAGTG GGAAACCAACCATGAGTGC ACCTTCAGA TGKAGAAAG CTCTTGATC TTCTCGAGG
S K S G K P P I S D M F S D L K D G R K L L D L L B G>

250 260 270 280 290 300 310 320
CCTCACAGGA ATACATTCGG CAAGAGAAC TGGTTCACCA AGGGTTCATG CCTTAAACAA TGTCAGACCA GTGCTGACGG
L T G T S L P K E R G S T R V H A L N N V N R V L Q>

330 340 350 360 370 380 390 400
TTTACATCA GAACTACATG GACTGTTGA ATATTGGAGG CACGGGATCT GTGGCTGGAA ATCCCAAGCT GACTTACGG
V L H Q N V D L V N I G G T D I V A G N P K L T L G>

410 420 430 440 450 460 470 480
TTACTCTGGA GCATCATCT GCAGTGGCG AGTGAAGGATG TCATGAAGGA TATCATGTCA GACCTGACG AGACAAACAG
L L W S I I L H Q V K D V M K D I M S D L Q G Q T N S>

490 500 510 520 530 540 550 560
CGAACGAGATC CTGCTGAGCT GGTCGGCGA GACCCACAG CCTTACAGCT AGTCTAACGT CCTCACTTC ACCAACAGT
E K I L L S W V R Q T T R P Y S Q V N V N L N F T T S>

570 580 590 600 610 620 630 640
GGACCGATGG ACTCGGCTTC AACGGCGGTC TCCACGGGCA CAJACCGAT CTTCAGACT GGGACGAGAT GGTCAAATG
W T D G L A F R A V L H R K P D L F D W D E M V K M>

650 660 670 680 690 700 710 720
TCCCCAAATG AGAGACTTGA CCTATGTTG GACAGGCC ACATCTT GGGAAATGAA AAGCTCTTAA GTCTGAAAC
S P I E R L D H A F D K A H T S L L G I E K L L S P E T>

730 740 750 760 770 780 790 800
TOTTOCTGTG CTCTCCCTG ACAAAGAAC TCAATTTATG TATTTAACGT CTCTGTTTGA GTGCTCTCT CAGCAGTC
V A V H L P D K K S I I M Y L T S L F E V L P Q Q V>

810 820 830 840 850 860 870 880
CTATGATTC CTGCGGAGAG GTGGAGAGTC TCCAGGAA GTATAGGA GAATGTCAG AGGAGAATGAT TGTATTCAG
T I D A I R E V E T E P R K Y K K E C B E E B I H I Q>

890 900 910 920 930 940 950 960
AGTGCAGTGC TGGCAGAGGA AGGGCAGAGT CCCGGAGTC AGACCCAGT CACCGTCAGT GAGTGGACA TGGATTGGA
S A V L A E E G Q S P R A E T P S T V T E V D M D L D>

970 980 990 1000 1010 1020 1030 1040
CAGCTACCG ATAGCTGTC AGGAGCTGTG GACTGGCTG CTGCGGGGG AGGACACGTT CGGGAGCCAA CATGACATT
S Y Q I A L E E V L T W L L S A B D T F Q E Q H D I>

1050 1060 1070 1080 1090 1100 1110 1120
CTGATGATGT CGAAGGCTGC AAAGACGAGT TTGCTACCCCA TGAAACTTT ATGATGAGC TGACAGGACA CCAGAGCAGC
S D D V E B V K E Q F A T H E T F M M E L T A H Q S S>

1130 1140 1150 1160 1170 1180 1190 1200
GTGGGGAGCC TCTCTGAGG TGCGAACCAA CTGATGACAC AAGGGACTCT GTCCCGAGAG GAGGGATTG AGATCCAGGA
V G S V L O A G N Q L M T Q G T L S R E E E F E I Q B>

1210 1220 1230 1240 1250 1260 1270 1280
ACAGATGACCC TTGCTGAGG CAAGGTGGGA GCGCTCTCGG GTGGAGAGCA TGAGAGGCC GTCCCGCTG CACGAGCTC
Q M T L L N A R W E A L R V E S M E R Q S R L H D A>

1290 1300 1310 1320 1330 1340 1350 1360
TGATGGAGCT CGAACAGAAA CGCTCGAGC AGCTCTCAAG CTGCGYGGCC CTGACAGAAG AGCGCATTC GAAGATGAG

Figure 9

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L M E L Q K K Q L Q O L S S W L A L T E B R I Q K M E>
 1370 1380 1390 1400 1410 1420 1430 1440
 AGCCCTCGGC TGGGTGATGAG CTCGCCCTCC CTGCGAGAGC TGCTTCAGA ACATAAAAGT TTGCAAAATG ACCTTGANGC
 S L P L G D D L P S L Q K L L Q E H K S L Q N D L E A >
 1450 1460 1470 1480 1490 1500 1510 1520
 TCAACAGGTG AAGGTAAATT CCTTAACTCA CTAGTGCGG ATGTTGGATG AAACAGCTGG GGAGTGGCTC ACAGCTCTTC
 E Q V K V N S L T H M V V I V D E N S G E S A T A L >
 1530 1540 1550 1560 1570 1580 1590 1600
 TGGAGATCA GTTACAGAAA CTGGGTGAGC GCXGGACAGC TGATATGCC TGGACTGAAG AACCTGGAA CAGGTGGAA
 L E D Q L Q K L G E R W T A V C R W T E E R W N R L Q >
 1610 1620 1630 1640 1650 1660 1670 1680
 GAAATCACTA TTCTGTGGCA GGAATTATG GAAGAGCAGT CTGCTGTGGA GGCTTGCTC ACCGAAJANG AGAGGGCTT
 E I S I L W Q E L L E B Q C L L E B A W L T E S K B E A L >
 1690 1700 1710 1720 1730 1740 1750 1760
 GGGATAAGTT CAACACAGCA ACTTTAAAGA CCAGAGGAGA CTAACTGAGA GTGTCGGCGC TCTGGCTATA TTGAGGAAG
 D K V Q T S N F K D Q K E L S T O V S V R R L A I L K E >
 1770 1780 1790 1800 1810 1820 1830 1840
 ACATGGAAAT GAGGGAGC ACTCTGGATC AACTGATGTA GATTGGCCAG GATGTTGGCC AATTACTGAG TAATCCCAAG
 D M E M K R Q T L D O L S E I G Q D V G Q Q L S S N P K >
 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920
 GCATCTAGA AGATACAGC TGACTCTGAG GAGCTAACAC AGAGATGGGA TTCTCTGCTT CAGAGACTCC AGAGCTCTTC
 A S K C M M N S D S E B L T Q R W H D S L D V Q R L E >
 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000
 TAACCAGGTG ACTCGAGCC TAGCGAAGCT CGCGATGTC CAGATTCAC AGAAGGACCT ATTGGAGACCC GTTCATCGA
 N Q V T Q A V A K L G M S Q I P Q K D L L E T V H V >
 2010 2020 2030 2040 2050 2060 2070 2080
 GAGAGACAGG GATGGWAGA AGGCCAACG AGGACTGTC TCTCTCTT ACAGAGCTC ACAGATGCTA GCAAAAGAGA
 R E Q G H M V K K F K Q E L P P F L T K A B H A M E K R >
 2090 2100 2110 2120 2130 2140 2150 2160
 TCAACCCCG AATTGGAGA AAACCTOCAA GRTTAAAGAG ACCTAACTCA AGAAATGGAA GTACATGCT AAAAACCTCAA
 S T T E L G N L Q O E L R D L T B E H E V H A E K L K >
 2170 2180 2190 2200 2210 2220 2230 2240
 ATGGCTGAAT AGAGCTGAAT TGGAGATCTC TTCAAGTAA ACTCTGGATT TACCTGUAAG GGTAAARAT TTGAAAGAT
 N L H R T E L M E N S D K S L S L P B R D K I S E S >
 2250 2260 2270 2280 2290 2300 2310 2320
 TAAAGGCTGT AATATGACA TGGTAAAGA TTTTCAGAGA GTGCGCTTAC ACCCTGAAAGG ATGTCATCCA GGAGCCCAGT
 L R T V N M T W N K I C R E V P T T L K E C I Q B P S >
 2330 2340 2350 2360 2370 2380 2390 2400
 TCTGTCTCAC AGACAGAAT TGCTGTCTCAT CCTCTATGCT AAAAGGTGGT GCTGTATCA TCTGCTCTG ATATTCCTGT
 S V S Q T R I A A H P N V Q K V V L V S B A S D I P V >
 2410 2420 2430 2440 2450 2460 2470 2480
 TCAGTCTCAT CGTACTTCGG AAATTCTCAT CCTCTGTGT CTGTATGAA CTATAACAGA ACTAGCCAC TGGCTGTGT
 Q S H R T S E I S I P A D L D K T I T E L A D W L V >
 2490 2500 2510 2520 2530 2540 2550 2560
 TAATCGACCA GATGCTGAG TCCACATG TGACTGTGG GGAGTGTAGA GAGATCAAA AGACCGTTTC CGGAATGAAA
 L I D Q M L K S N I V T V G D V E E I N K T V S R M K >
 2570 2580 2590 2600 2610 2620 2630 2640
 ATTACAAAGG CTGACTTAAAG ACAGCGCCT CCTCAGCTGG ATTATGTGG TACATTTGCA CAGAATTGCA AAAATAAAGC
 I T K A D L E Q R H P Q L D Y V F T L A Q N L K N K A >
 2650 2660 2670 2680 2690 2700 2710 2720
 TCTCAGTCA GATGATGAGA CGCAATTC AGAAAATTC GAAAGGTCA AGAACCTGAG GGTGCGCCT CAGCATGGC

Figure 9 cont ...

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S	S	S	D	M	R	T	A	I	I	E	K	L	E	R	V	K	N	Q	W	D	G	T	Q	H	G
2730	2740	2750	2760	2770	2780	2790	2790	2800																	
TTGAGCTAAC ACAGCAGCGAG CTIGAGGACCA TGATTTATGA CAGTCCTAGC TGGATGACCC ATAGGGAGGA GACTGAAGAA V E L R Q Q O L E D M I D S L Q W D D H R E E T E R																									
2810	2820	2830	2840	2850	2860	2870	2870	2880																	
CCTAGATGAGAA AATATGAGGC TCGACTCTAT ATTTCCTAGC AGGCCCGAGG GGATCCACTC ACCAAAACAA TTTCGTGATAA L M R K Y E A R L Y I L Q Q A R R D P L T K Q I S D N																									
2890	2900	2910	2920	2930	2940	2950	2950	2960																	
CCAATATGCG CCTTCAGAACG TGGGCTCTGG AGATGGTATC GTCATGGGT TCGATTAACCT CCTGCAGAA CTCTGGGAGG Q I L L O L G P G D G I V M A F D N V L Q K L L E																									
2970	2980	2990	3000	3010	3020	3030	3030	3040																	
AATATGCGGAG TGATGACCA AGGAATGAGA AAGAAACCAC AGACTAGCTT AAAACATCAT CGATCACTT CAACAAAGT B Y G S D D T R N V K E T T E Y L K T S W I N L K Q S																									
3050	3060	3070	3080	3090	3100	3110	3110	3120																	
ATTGCTGACA GACAGAACCC CTGGGAGGTG GAGTCAGGAGG CGGTGAGGCC CTCTCCAGA GATCTGGAAA ACTTCCTGAA I A D R Q N A L E A W R T V Q A S R R D L E N F P L K																									
3130	3140	3150	3160	3170	3180	3190	3190	3200																	
GTGGGATCCAA GAAGGAGAGA CCACATGAGA TOTGCTTG GATGCCCTTC ATCGGGAGAA TGTCTCTTCG GATGATGATC W I Q E A E T T V N V L V D A S H R E N A L Q D S																									
3210	3220	3230	3240	3250	3260	3270	3270	3280																	
TGGCCAGGGAG ACTCCAAACG CAGATGGAGG ACATCCAGGG AGAAATGAGG GCCCCAAATG ACATATTTAA AACGATGIC D A R E L K Q M Q D I Q A E I D A H N D I F K G S I D																									
3290	3300	3310	3320	3330	3340	3350	3350	3360																	
GGAAACAGGGC AGAGAGTGT AAAAGCTTG GGAAATTCTG ANAGGCTCTA TAGTCTCTAA CATCGACTGG ATGATGATGAA G N R Q K H V K A L G H S E E A T M L Q H R L D D M N																									
3370	3380	3390	3400	3410	3420	3430	3440																		
CCAAGATGCG ATGCTTAAAGA AAGCAAATTA TCTGAGCTT AGGGCCCATG TGGAGCCCG AGCGTGAAGG TGGAAAGCGT Q R H N D L K A K A S A S I R A H L E A S A E K W N R																									
3450	3460	3470	3480	3490	3500	3510	3520																		
TGCTGATGTC CTAGAGAGAA CTGATCAAAAT GCTGATGATAT GAAGAGCTGA GAGCTTAAGA AAACAAATGCG TAITGGAGGA L L M S L E R L I K H L N M K D B E L K K Q N P I G G																									
3530	3540	3550	3560	3570	3580	3590	3590	3600																	
GATGTTCTGAG CCTTCATGAGC CGAGTAGACG CCTTGTGGC CCTGAGACCG CGGTGTTGG GAGAAAGAAT ATTCCTGCT D V P A L Q L Y D H C K A L R R E L K E X E Y S V L																									
3690	3620	3630	3640	3650	3660	3670	3670	3680																	
GAATGCTGTC GACGGAGGCC GAGTTTCTCT GCGCKGATCG CCAATGCGGG CCCCTGAGAA GCCAAGAGAA AACCTGACAT K A V D Q A R V F L A D Q P I E A P E E F R R N L Q																									
3770	3780	3790	3710	3720	3730	3740	3750	3760																	
CAAAAGAGA ATTAATCTCTT GAGGGAGAGG CCAAAAGAGT TGCCAAAGGC ATGGCGAAAC AGTCTCTGA ATGCHAGAA S K T E L T P E E R A Q K I A K A M R K Q S S E V K E																									
3850	3860	3870	3880	3890	3910	3920	3920	3930																	
GGAGGCTAG ATGACCTAGC ACUGCTGACAT GAAGGGCGA GAGTCCGGUC GGAAATGCGTG GAAGCCCGTG GGAGACTTAC G A M D D L D A D M K E A E S V R N G W K P V G D L																									
3930	3940	3950	3960	3970	3980	3990	3990	4000																	
TCATGTCGTC GCTGCGAGAT CACATGAA AATCATGGC ATTAGGAGGA GAAATGCGAC CAATCAACTT TAAGTTAAA L I D S L O D H I E K I M A F R E E I A P I N F K V K																									
4010	4020	4030	4040	4050	4060	4070	4070	4080																	
ACGGCTGAGAT ATTATTCAGC TCACTGCTCT COACTGAGC TGCATGAGC TCTAAGAGTC TCTCGCCAGC TAGATGACCT																									

Figure 9 cont ...

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Figure 9 cont.

M E R T N G S F L T D S S S T T G S V E D E H A L I Q >
 5450 5460 5470 5480 5490 5500 5510 5520
 CAGTATTGCC AAACACTGGG AGGAGAGTCC CCGATGAGCC AGGCCAGAG CGCAGCTAG ATCCCTGAGT CAGTAGAGAG
 Q Y C Q T L G G E S P V S Q P Q S P A Q I L K S V E R >
 5530 5540 5550 5560 5570 5580 5590 5600
 GGAAAGAACGT GGAGAACCTGG AGAGGATCAT TGCTGACCTG GGAGGAGAC AAAGAAATCT ACAGGTGGAG TATGAGCAGC
 E B R G E L E R I I A D L E E B E Q R N L Q V E Y E Q >
 5610 5620 5630 5640 5650 5660 5670 5680
 TGAAAGGACCA GCACCTCCGA AGCGGGCTCC CTGTCGGITC AC CGGCAGAG TGAGTATAT CTCCCATCA CACOTCTGAG
 L K D Q H L R R G L P V G S P P E S I I S P H H T S E >
 5690 5710 5720 5730 5740 5750 5760
 GATTCAAGAAC TTATAGCAGA AGCAAAAGTC CTCAGGCAAC ACAAAAGGTGG CCTGGAGGT AGGATCAGA TTTAGAGA
 D S E L I A E A K L L R Q H K G R L E A R M Q I L E D >
 5770 5780 5790 5800 5810 5820 5830 5840
 TCACAATAAA CAGCTGGAGT CTCAGCTCCA CC CGCTCTCGGA CAGCTGGTG ACCAGGCTGA ATCTGATTC CGAATCAATG
 H N K Q L E S Q L H R L R Q L L E Q P E S D S R I N >
 5850 5860 5870 5880 5890 5900 5910 5920
 GTGTTTCCCC ATGGCTTCT CCTCAGCATT CTGCACTGAG CTACTCGCTT GATCCAGATG CCTCCGGCCC ACAGTTCAC
 G V S P W A S P Q H S A L S Y S L D P D A S G P Q F H >
 5930 5940 5950 5960 5970 5980 5990 6000
 CAGGCAAGCG GAGGAGGACT GCTGGCCCA CC CGCACGACA CCAGCACGGA TCTCAAGGAG GTCACTGGC AGATTCAAC
 Q A A G E D L L A P P H D T S T D L T E V M E Q I H C >
 6010 6020 6030 6040 6050
 CACGTTTCCA TCTTGCTCC CAAATGTTCC CAGCAGGCCA CAGGCAATGT ATTCACTAG
 T F P S C C P N V P S R P Q A M * >

Figure 9 cont ...

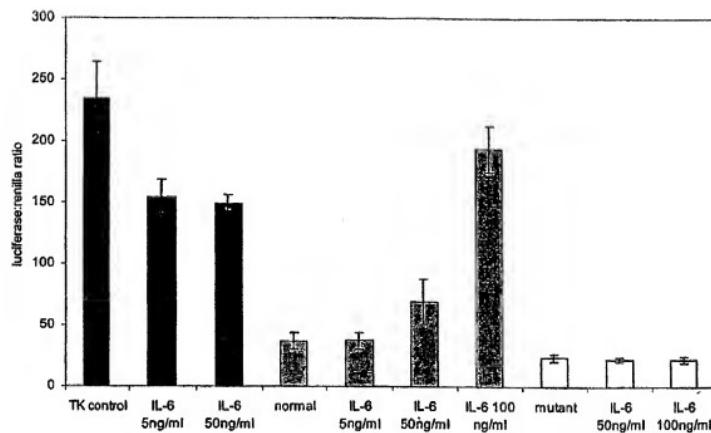


Figure 10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int'l. Application No
PCT/GB 00/03800

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 7 C12N15/85 C12N15/12 A01K67/027 C07K14/47 C07K16/18
 A61K38/17

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 IPC 7 C12N C07K

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the International search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, EMBL, BIOSIS, STRAND

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	DATABASE EMBL 'Online! Sequence HS91J24, human DNA sequence from clone 91J24 on chromosome 6q24. ; Contains part of utrophin gene. AccNo AL204474, 18 June 1998 (1998-06-18) TUBBY B: XP002160374 nucleotides 87734-88930 are identical to the sequence in figure 1 and have 83% sequence identity with the sequence in figure 2	2-9, 23-28
P,X	EP 1 033 401 A (GENSET SA) 6 September 2000 (2000-09-06) SEQ ID NO:5164, claim 13 ----- -----	23-28 ----

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the International filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *C* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the International filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the International filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *V* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
- *D* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the International search

15 February 2001

Date of mailing of the International search report

28/02/2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patenttaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax. (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Cupido, M

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 00/03800

C (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 97 22696 A (MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL ;TINSLEY JM; DAVIES KE) 26 June 1997 (1997-06-26) cited in the application figures 3,9	23-52
P,X	BURTON EDWARD A ET AL: "A second promoter provides an alternative target for therapeutic up-regulation of utrophin in Duchenne muscular dystrophy." PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE UNITED STATES, vol. 96, no. 24, 23 November 1999 (1999-11-23), pages 14025-14030, XP002160373 Nov. 23, 1999 ISSN: 0027-8424 the whole document	1-52
A	NGUYEN THI MAN ET AL: "FULL-LENGTH AND SHORT FORMS OF UTROPHIN, THE DYSTROPHIN-RELATED PROTEIN" FEBS LETTERS, NL, ELSEVIER SCIENCE PUBLISHERS, AMSTERDAM, vol. 358, no. 3, 30 January 1995 (1995-01-30), pages 262-266, XP000486346 ISSN: 0014-5793 the whole document	42-52

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/GB 00/03800

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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WO 9722696	A	26-06-1997	AU 724525 B AU 1164497 A EP 0868511 A JP 2000504931 T	21-09-2000 14-07-1997 07-10-1998 25-04-2000